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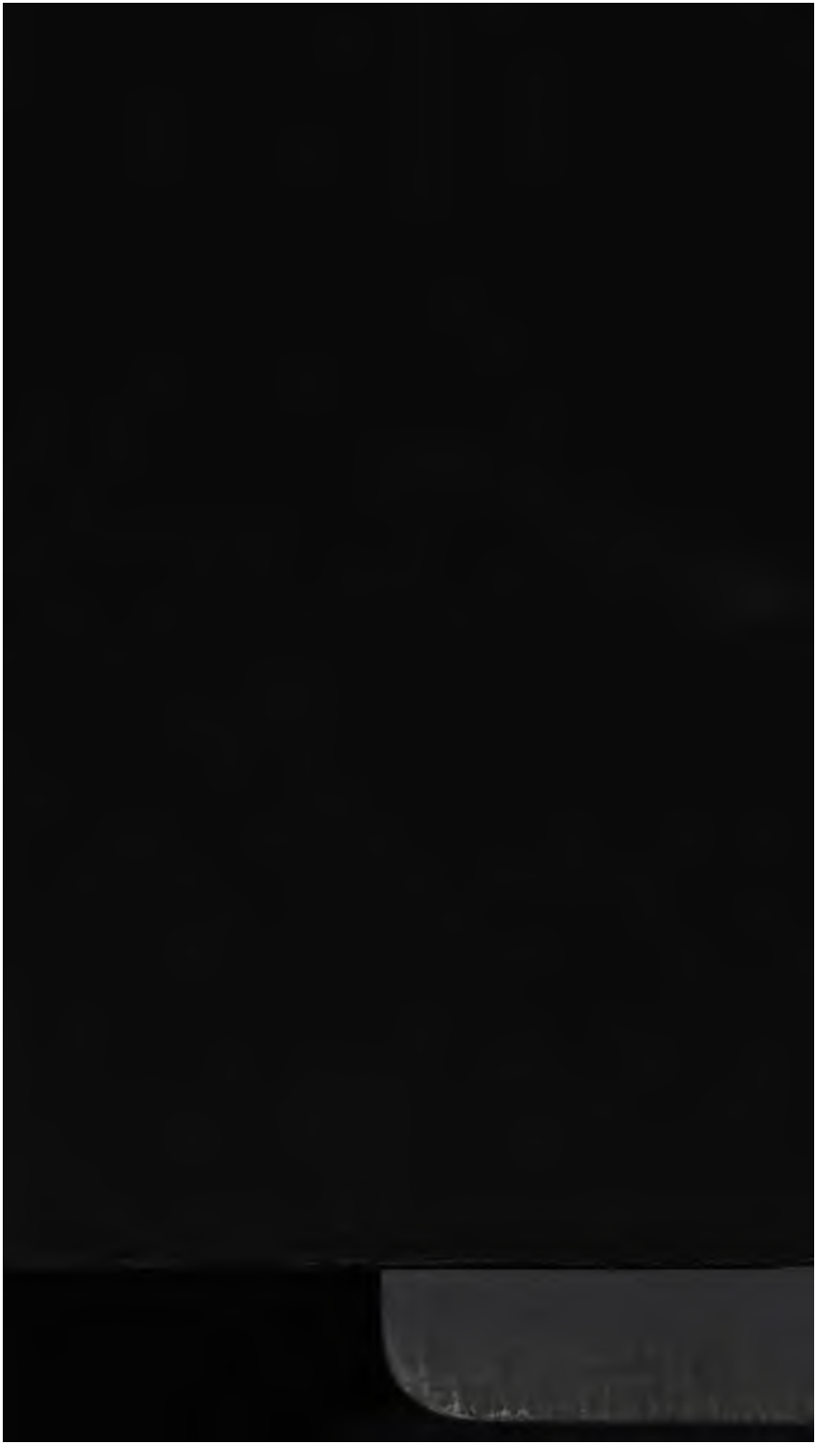

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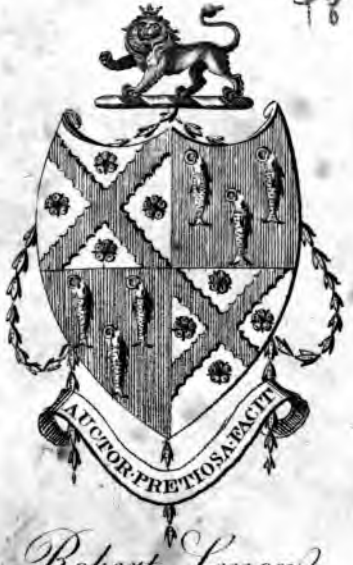

Robert Lenox
NEW YORK.

SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

Sometime President of the College in New-Jersey.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

TO WHICH ARE NOW ADDED

THREE OCCASIONAL SERMONS,

NOT INCLUDED IN THE FORMER EDITIONS;

MEMOIRS AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR;

AND

TWO SERMONS ON OCCASION OF HIS DEATH,

By the Rev. Drs. Gibbons and Finley.

VOL. I.

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THE following SERMONS, by Preſident DAVIES, have already been honoured with a high degree of public approbation. The ſale of four impreſſions in the courſe of a few years, ſuperadded to the preſent demand and known value of the Work, ſuggeſted to the Publiſher that a *fifth Edition* might be printed with a probability of ſucceſs. The contents of the former editions, in five, are here printed complete in three volumes, with the addition of *three Occaſional Sermons*; which will doubtleſs be very acceptable to the admirers of this valuable Author. Thus, it may be truly ſaid, the price is reduced, and the value of the Work conſiderably enhanced.

A few Biographical Anecdotes of the Author are prefixed to the preſent volumes, from which we may collect that his principles and practices were equally exemplary.

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With chap. xxxiv. 6, 7.

And the Lord paſſed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth; keeping mercy for thouſands; forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſſion, and ſin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. Page 410—430

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Preface

Preface to the firſt Edition.

AN epiſtolary correſpondence commenced between the Rev. Mr. *Samuel Davies* and myſelf, in the year 1752, and was continued till the time of his deceaſe.

When I began the intercourſe with him, I could not entertain any very probable hopes that we ſhould ever have an interview in our world, but Mr. *Davies*'s viſit to *Great-Britain*, in the year 1753, with that venerable man the Rev. Mr. *Gilbert Tennent*, of *Philadelphia*, to ſolicit benefactions for the college of *New-Jerſey*, gave me a pleaſure beyond all reaſonable expectation; and the friendſhip which was kindled at the diſtance of ſeveral thouſand miles from each other, was increaſed by free and frequent converſes during the time, almoſt a year, of Mr. *Davies*'s reſidence on this ſide the *Atlantic*.

After his departure from our country to *America*, I received ſeveral letters from Mr. *Davies*, and had the honour of being numbered among his particular friends, to whom he communicated the very ſecrets of his boſom.

In a letter, dated *September* 12, 1757, Mr. *Davies* (at that juncture ſcarce recovered from a violent and dangerous fever) thus writes to me: "I want to live "after I am dead, not in name, but in public uſefulneſs: I was therefore about to order in my will that "all my notes, which are tolerably full, might be ſent "to you to correct and publiſh ſuch of them as you "might judge conducive to the public good. Pray, "what do you think of the project, if the like occaſion "ſhould return while you are among mortals?"

What anſwer I gave to my friend's propoſal I cannot exactly recollect, but I am perſuaded that my af-

fection to him would not permit me to put a negative upon his requeſt.

On the 4th of *February*, 1761, this excellent man was by a violent fever removed from our world: and, though he died univerſally lamented, yet, as he had an uncommon intereſt in my affection while living, ſo his deceaſe opened the ſprings of the moſt afflicting ſorrow in my breaſt, and perhaps I may truly apply, with a little variation, the words of the *Poet*,

Multis ille flebilis occidit,
Nulli flebilior quàm mihi.—
HORAT. Od. Lib. I. Od. 24.

But, though the prophet is aſcended, his mantle is left behind. A very conſiderable number of his SERMONS has been tranſmitted to me, and thence I have ſelected what were ſufficient to compoſe the enſuing volumes.

As the Sermons which I now lay before the public were Mr. *Davies*'s uſual popular diſcourſes, it may naturally be ſuppoſed that they required patient and accurate reviſal in order to their publication; and that the *Editor*, if he would diſcharge his duty as he ought, muſt find himſelf under the neceſſity of making ſome occaſional alterations and amendments as to the language, and eſpecially of adjuſting the pointing. Theſe liberties I have taken, and have endeavoured to execute my truſt in the ſame manner which I have reaſon to think Mr. *Davies*, if he had been living, would have approved and commended; and in which I ſhould wiſh my own Sermons, ſhould I leave any behind me worthy of the public view, might be corrected and ſent into the world.

They who knew and heard Mr. *Davies* will need no further proof than the peruſal of the diſcourſes themſelves that they are the real productions of the author to whom they are aſcribed. The ſun ſhews himſelf to be the ſun by the very beams with which he irradiates and enlivens mankind, and is eaſily diſtinguiſhed from other luminaries by his ſurpaſſing luſtre.

The

The *Sermons* I have choſen for publication ſtrictly anſwer the *Advertiſement* in the PROPOSALS for printing them; namely, *Sermons on the moſt* USEFUL *and* IMPORTANT *Subjects, adapted to the* FAMILY *and* CLOSET. The reader will meet with no diſcourſes in theſe volumes but what are calculated for general uſe, or ſuch as relate to the common conditions, duties, and intereſts of mankind in one form or another; and in how many of them has both the Saint and the Sinner a *portion of meat* provided for him? May it prove a portion in due ſeaſon! and may both the one and the other riſe from the ſacred feaſt divinely ſtrengthened and bleſſed!

Amidſt an attention to the very numerous and important duties of my ſeveral departments in life, the additional weight of a due preparation of Three Volumes of poſthumous diſcourſes for the eye of the public, and of the careful reviews of the proof-ſheets as they came from the preſs, has taken up no ſmall portion of my time, and been no inconſiderable acceſſion to my conſtant labours; but I have moſt cheerfully devoted both my hours and my toils to the very valuable purpoſes—of fulfilling the deſires of my dear friend Mr. *Davies*, which I own have a kind of irreſiſtible power over me;—of contributing, as I would hope, to the ſpiritual benefit of my fellow-heirs of immortality, by putting into their hands a collection of very pious and uſeful Sermons;—and, of aſſiſting and comforting the mournful widow and orphans of a friend who was as dear to me as a brother.

I take the liberty of returning thanks, in the name of Mrs. *Davies*, (for to her *only* the profits of the publication ſhall be applied) to the numerous SUBSCRIBERS to the work; and I hope they will find themſelves amply recompenced for their benevolence to the widow and fatherleſs, by the ſacred advantage and pleaſure they and their families will receive in the peruſal of theſe diſcourſes; in which piety and genius ſeem to have vied with each other which ſhould excel, and triumph in the ſuperior glory.

Notwith-

Notwithſtanding all the time and pains the preſent work has coſt me, and the ſtrong ſenſe I have that a like proportion of both would be required in the execution of a like undertaking, yet I beg leave to aſſure the public, that, as I have a large number of Mr. *Davies*'s manuſcript Sermons ſtill in my hands, I ſhall be ready (health being continued to me) to reviſe and publiſh the Author's remaining diſcourſes, whenever there ſhall be an encouraging proſpect of benefit to Mrs. *Davies*, or her orphans, by a freſh publication. *As to viſit*, or relieve, *the fatherleſs and the widow in their affliction** is an eſſential branch of chriſtian duty, ſo it is a duty I truſt will never be wanting, whenever an opportunity offers for exemplifying it, from my firſt regards and practice.

Mr. *Davies* annexed to ſome of his Sermons HYMNS of his own compoſition. Had this been uniformly the caſe they might have accompanied his Diſcourſes to the preſs, but as it is not, I have omitted them; but, if death or incapacity prevent not my deſign, I intend hereafter to collect what HYMNS of his have fallen into my hands, and publiſh them together with ſome of my own on the like occaſions.

I have prefixed to theſe Volumes a SERMON upon the death of our Author by that excellent man the Rev. Dr. *Samual Finley*, Mr. *Davies*'s ſucceſſor to the preſidency of *New-Jerſey* College: I have alſo re-publiſhed the Diſcourſe I preached to my people the next LORD's day after I received the diſtreſſing news of Mr. *Davies*'s deceaſe; and have ventured to add an Elegiac Poem to the memory of my dear friend; in which if the reader finds not a vein of poeſy worthy of the ſubject, yet he will not, I preſume, be diſpleaſed at the efforts, however languid and inadequate, of bereaved mourning friendſhip to do honour to the character of a perſon ſo amiable and deſerving.

The idea I have given of our Author in my Sermon, and particularly in my Poem, and above all, the juſt

* James, i. 27.

juſt and lively, the ſtrong and elegant picture which Dr. *Finley* has exhibited of him in his diſcourſe upon his death, render it unneceſſary to enlarge this Preface with an account of Mr. *Davies*'s merit and accompliſhments; I ſhall therefore only add, that I moſt ſincerely wiſh that young miniſters more eſpecially would peruſe theſe Volumes with the deepeſt attention and ſeriouſneſs, and endeavour, in conjunction with earneſt prayer for divine illumination and aſſiſtance, to form their diſcourſes according to the model of our Author; in which, if I miſtake not, a critical Scrutiny into the ſacred Texts which he chooſes for his ſubjects, a natural Eduction and clear Repreſentation of their genuine meaning, an elaborate and ſatisfactory Proof of the various heads of doctrine, a ſteady Proſecution of his point, together with an eaſy and plain, but yet ſtrong and pertinent Enlargement, and a free, animated, and powerful Application and Improvement, wonderfully adapted to awaken the conſciences, and ſtrike the hearts of both ſaints and ſinners, mingle the various excellencies of learning, judgment, eloquence, piety, and ſeraphic zeal, in one uncommon glory; not unlike the beams of the ſun collected by a burning glaſs, that at once ſhine with a moſt dazzling brightneſs, and ſet fire, wherever the blaze is directed, to objects ſuſceptive of their celeſtial influence, and a transformation into their own nature.

THOMAS GIBBONS.

Hoxton-Square, Nov. 14, 1765.

THE

DISINTERESTED AND DEVOTED CHRISTIAN:

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

NASSAU-HALL, PRINCETON,

MAY 28, 1761.

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE

REV. SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW-JERSEY.

BY SAMUEL FINLEY, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE SAID COLLEGE.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SOME MEMOIRS OF MR. DAVIES.

BY ANOTHER HAND.

Qui conſiderat qualis erit in Morte, ſemperque pavidus erit in operatione, atque inde in Oculis ſui Conditoris vivet, nil quod tranſeat, appetit: cunctis vitæ preſentis deſideriis contradicit, et pene mortuum ſe conſiderat, quia moriturum ſe minime ignorat. GREGOR. L. 12. Moral.

TO

Mrs. MARTHA DAVIES, the Mother,

AND

Mrs. JEAN DAVIES, the Widow,

OF THE LATE

Rev. PRESIDENT DAVIES, deceaſed,

The following Sermon,

Preached on Occaſion of his lamented Death,

IS,

With the tendereſt Reſpect,

PRESENTED BY

Their ſincere and affectionate Friend,

and humble Servant,

SAMUEL FINLEY.

ROMANS, xiv. 7, 8.

For none of us liveth to himſelf, and no man dieth to himſelf. For whether we live, we live unto the LORD; *or whether we die, we die unto the* LORD: *whether we live therefore, or die, we are the* LORD's.

AS the very dear and reverend man, whoſe premature and unexpected death, we, amongſt thouſands, this day lament, expreſſed his deſire, that, upon this mournful event, a Sermon ſhould be preached from theſe words, he plainly intimated his expectation, that the audience ſhould be entertained, not with an ornamented funeral Oration, but with ſuch an inſtructive diſcourſe as the text itſelf naturally ſuggeſts. The ſubject being his own choice, I cannot doubt but this friendly audience will the more cloſely and ſeriouſly attend, as conceiving him, *though dead, yet ſpeaking* to them the ſolemn truths it contains. For having been admitted into the full knowledge of his religious principles, I may preſume on ſpeaking many of the ſentiments he intended from this text, though not in his more ſublime and oratorial manner.

When I reflect on the truly chriſtian, generous, yet *ſtrict Catholiciſm* that diſtinguiſhes this whole chapter, and how deeply it was imprinted on Mr. *Davies*'s own ſpirit, and influenced the courſe of his life, I am ready to conclude, that perhaps no text could be more aptly choſen on the occaſion. It expreſſes the very temper that ſhould be predominant in all, and which actually is ſo in every pious breaſt.

That we may apprehend the ſcope and genuine ſenſe of the words, it is neceſſary to obſerve, that warm debates at that time aroſe between the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* converts, about the difference of *meats* and *days* eſtabliſhed by the *Moſaic* law; and, ſo ſharp was the contention, that they were mutually diſpoſed to exclude each other from chriſtian communion. The *Gentile*,

being under no bias from the powerful prejudices of education and cuſtom, was ſooner and eaſier convinced of his freedom from that *yoke of bondage*, and deſpiſed the *Jew* as weak to admiration, and ſcrupulous to a fault. The *Jew*, on the other hand, perſuaded that theſe ancient divine inſtitutions were ſtill obligatory, cenſured and condemned the *Gentile* as inconſcientious, and profanely regardleſs of GOD's awful authority.

The Apoſtle, in order to quell the growing ſtrife, maturely determines that, though the *Gentile* held the right ſide of the queſtion, yet both parties were wrong as to their temper of mind, and the manner in which they managed the controverſy; and that they laid an undue ſtreſs on the matters of difference, and carried their cenſures higher than the merits of the cauſe would at all juſtify. He therefore recommends moderation to both, and ſets before them ſufficient reaſons why they ſhould judge of each other more charitably, ſince they agreed in all thoſe principal points that would juſtly denominate them "the ſervants of the LORD." For if they would reckon it a bold intruſion to call before their tribunal, condemn, and puniſh *another man's ſervant*, over whom they had no legal authority; how much more arrogant and preſumptuous muſt it be ſo to treat *a ſervant of the* LORD? *ver.* 4.

Again, let them be ſo candid as to perſuade themſelves, that, unleſs the contrary be evident, they who differ from them, miſtaken or not, are influenced by a conſcientious regard to the divine glory, *ver.* 6. *This* admitted, their perſonal cenſures will neceſſarily be milder, even though their judgment of the points in debate continue unaltered; and *this* muſt be admitted, if they can charitably judge, that their reſpective opponents are real chriſtians: for in *all ſuch* the governing principle is, "not to live to themſelves, but to the "LORD. For none of us liveth to himſelf, and no "man dieth to himſelf. For whether we live, we live "unto the LORD; or whether we die, we die unto "the LORD: whether we live therefore, or die, we "are

"are the LORD's." Now, if no pious perſon lives merely to pleaſe himſelf, we ought not to judge that his averſion from, or attachment to certain meats and days, ariſes *only* from a ſelfiſh humour: but, on the contrary, ſince his whole life is governed by an honeſt regard to the will of GOD, it is altogether credible that, in his different conduct reſpecting meats and days, he acts from the ſame principle; for whatever is true of the general, is alſo true of all the particulars contained under it. Suppoſe a man to be a real Chriſtian, you then ſuppoſe him to be of an upright heart, of a tender conſcience, and one who dares not to neglect, nor live in contradiction to known duty. He makes it his main buſineſs to pleaſe GOD, and ſhall we be implacably diſguſted becauſe he does not rather endeavour to pleaſe us? GOD forbid.

Thus, while our text affords a convincing argument for moderation in judging of other Chriſtians, who differ from us in circumſtantials, it teaches us what ſhould be the *principle* and *end* of our life, and that both *negatively* and *poſitively*. We may not live nor die to ourſelves, but to the LORD.

I. "We may not live to ourſelves."

This propoſition ſuppoſes, what is a demonſtrable truth, that we are not the abſolute proprietors, and therefore have not the rightful diſpoſal of our lives. For ſince we could exert no kind of efficiency in bringing ourſelves from nothing into exiſtence, we could not poſſibly deſign ourſelves for any end or purpoſe of our own. Hence it is evident, that, whoſe property ſoever we are, we belong not to ourſelves; conſequently, it is the higheſt indecency to behave as though we were accountable to none other. As rationally may we claim ſelf-exiſtence and independence. It will, therefore, be an eternal ſoleciſm in action to aim chiefly at our own glory, ſeek only our *own things*, or purſue moſt eagerly our own pleaſures. Right reaſon itſelf peremptorily denies that the dictates of our own minds are our ſupreme rule of conduct, or that our own will is our law;

much

much leſs may we ſubject ourſelves to the government of blind paſſions, or indulge to irregular appetites.

We are not at liberty, nor have we any authority to employ either the members of our bodies, or powers of our ſouls, at pleaſure, as if we had originally deſigned their uſe. Hence it will appear criminal, on the one hand, to waſte our time, or expend our ſtrength in uſeleſs exerciſes; and, on the other, to allow an idle negligence of neceſſary buſineſs. Our *tongues* themſelves, thoſe *unruly members*, muſt be patient of reſtraint; for it is the language only of haughty rebels to ſay, "Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?"*(a)* Our very thoughts are to be confined within preſcribed limits, and all our rational powers *ſtatedly* exerciſed, not in merely curious and amuſing reſearches, but in matters the moſt uſeful and important.

It alſo follows, that the product of our activity, whatever is acquired by the exertion of theſe powers, ought not to terminate in ourſelves. Are we in purſuit of learning, that ornament of human minds, it ſhould not be with a view only to ſhine more conſpicuous, but that we may ſerve our generation to better advantage. Has GOD bleſſed "the hand of the diligent" with abundant riches? We are not to conſider them as the means of gratifying vanity, or "fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh, and of the mind;" for we muſt "honour the LORD with our ſubſtance."*(b)* Has GOD clothed any of us with power? This is not a diſcharge from his ſervice, nor a freedom from ſubjection to his laws, but a ſtronger obligation to duty, as it gives us an opportunity of more extenſive uſefulneſs.

Finally, ſince we were not the authors of our lives, we can have no right to take them away. We have no power to determine, either the time or kind of death, any more than we can ward off, or ſuſpend its blow when commiſſioned to deſtroy. Therefore, amidſt all the miſeries that can make life itſelf an inſupportable burden, and all the glorious proſpects that can make us

(*a*) Pſalm xii. 4. (*b*) Prov. iii. 9.

us impatiently pant for diſſolution, it muſt be our determinate purpoſe, that "all the days of our appointed "time, we will wait till our change come."(*c*)

As theſe particulars, examined by the ſtricteſt reaſon, will all appear to be immediate conſequences from ſelf-evident principles, and muſt all be confeſſed by him, who acknowledges that "he is not his own lord "and maſter;" it will follow as an evident truth, that "the evangelical duty of ſelf-denial is founded on the "everlaſting reaſon of things."

Reflecting farther on the preceding obſervations, they force upon us the diſagreeable conviction, that our whole race has revolted from GOD, and riſen up in rebellion againſt him. "The world evidently lies in "wickedneſs;" for the allowed practice of men ſuppoſes principles, which, they themſelves being judges, muſt confeſs to be palpably falſe and abſurd. They act as if they believed they were made for themſelves, and had no other buſineſs in life but the gratification of their reſpective humours. One exerts all his powers, and ſpends all his time in nothing elſe but endeavouring to amaſs heaps of worldly treaſure: another, by riotous living, diſperſes what had been collected with anxious care and aſſiduous labour. Some live in malice and envy, whoſe favourite employ is calumny and wrathful contentions, as if they had been created for no other end but to be the peſts of ſociety: others blaſpheme the name of GOD, deſpiſe his authority, mock at religion, and ridicule ſerious perſons and things. One has no other purpoſe in life but ſport and merriment: another eats to gluttony, and drinks to beſottedneſs. Yet all theſe, and nameleſs ranks of other daring offenders, would be aſhamed in a chriſtian country to profeſs it as their ſerious belief, that they were made by a moſt wiſe, holy, and righteous GOD, preſerved, bleſſed, and loaded with benefits every day, on purpoſe that they "might "work all theſe abominations," or, in order to live juſt as they do.

If,

(*c*) Job, xiv. 14.

If, then, it is confeſſedly impious and unreaſonable to live to *ourſelves*, it neceſſarily follows that we are the property of another, for it will ever be "lawful for one "to do what he will with his own." And whoſe can we be but *his* who gave us exiſtence? Or, if ties of gratitude can more powerfully influence ingenuous minds than even thoſe of nature, who can ſo juſtly claim us as He, "who, as we hope, loved us, and waſhed us "from our ſins in his own blood?"*(d)* This leads me to obſerve,

II. That we ſhould "live and die to the LORD." This can admit of no debate; for if our Maker and Redeemer be our rightful owner, then whatever we are, or have, or can do, muſt be for him. Being his ſervants, we muſt "ſhew all good fidelity" in his buſineſs. The talents with which he has entruſted us, more or fewer, or of whatever kind, may not be returned without improvement; for, as is fit and proper, he "requires his own with uſury."*(e)* He is our King, whoſe prerogative it is to direct our courſe of action, and propoſe the end at which we are to aim; to "mete "out the bounds of our habitation," and carve our portion; and it becomes us to give the moſt ready and cheerful obedience to his commands, and ſubmit to all his diſpoſals.

Our living thus to the LORD plainly ſuppoſes our being ſenſible of our entire dependence on him, and that we devote ourſelves to his ſervice. We muſt "preſent "our bodies a living ſacrifice,"*(f)* without reſerve or heſitation; and "avouch the LORD to be our GOD, to "walk in his ways, and to keep his ſtatutes, and judg-"ments, and commandments, and to hearken to his "voice."*(g)* We bind ourſelves to him in a firm covenant, not for a limited term of months and years, but for ever and ever, and acquieſce in *Him* as our chief good.

The

(*d*) Rev. i. 6.
(*e*) Matt. xxv. 27.
(*f*) Rom. xii. 1.
(*g*) Deut. xxvi. 17.

The ſolemnity of ſuch an infinitely important tranſaction between the glorious majeſty of heaven, and ſuch mean creatures as we, who are "but duſt and aſhes," cannot but ſtrike us with reverential awe. And what will make it yet more humbling is the conſideration of our guilt. We not only *as Creatures* take upon us to ſpeak unto the LORD our Maker, but *as Criminals* approach to the ſeat of our offended and moſt righteous Judge. Dare we then trifle, and not rather be moſt ſerious and deliberate? Reflecting that we are in the preſence of the heart-ſearching GOD will naturally make us watchful over every thought and motion of our ſpirits, and engage us to the greateſt ſincerity in ſurrendering to him our all. We will give him our hearts themſelves; keep nothing back; nor except againſt any terms he ſhall pleaſe to propoſe, but yield at diſcretion.

On this occaſion a conſciouſneſs of our having revolted from him, neglected his ſervice, purloined his goods, and, in every reſpect, behaved moſt ungratefully and undutifully, will affect us with the moſt genuine ſorrow. Therefore, when repentant we return to him, we ſhall, covered with ſhame, approach with the *Prodigal*'s ſelf-abaſing confeſſion, "Father! I have ſinned againſt "heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to "be called thy ſon."(*b*) He will "ſurely hear us be-"moaning ourſelves, like *Ephraim*," that we have too long wrought the will of the fleſh, and ſuffered "other "uſurping lords to have dominion over us;" but now we humbly beg forgiveneſs, his gracious acceptance of our perſons, and admiſſion into his family, ſhould it be only on trial, "as hired ſervants."

But though our ſins have made us vile, and the view of their odious nature makes us "loathe ourſelves in "our own ſight," yet a conviction of the free grace and mercy of GOD in CHRIST will comfort and encourage our dejected and diffident hearts. The cords of love will draw us nearer and nearer, until we ſhall aſſume an humble "boldneſs, to enter into the holieſt of "all

(*b*) Luke, xv. 18.

" all by the blood of JESUS."(*i*) Sacred love, and a grateful ſenſe of the unmerited favours of our GOD will now diſpoſe us to, and animate us in the performance of every duty. Religion will be our choſen courſe, and the commandments of GOD will be ſo far from being burdenſome to us, that we ſhall rejoice in them, and delight in " doing the things that pleaſe him." Our whole time will be conſecrated to his ſervice: no part of it can be ſpared for fleſhly indulgencies, or ſinful pleaſures, but will be employed either in ſome poſitive duty, or in preparation for it in the proper ſeaſon.

This religious bent of mind will manifeſt itſelf in all our conduct, and give even common actions a different direction. If we attend our ordinary callings, we ſhall be active and diligent, not in order to gratify an earthly temper, but from an obediental regard to ſupreme authority. When our ſpirits flag through intenſe application to buſineſs, and recreation becomes neceſſary, our very diverſions will be conſidered as our duty, and ſo as a branch of our religion: and as they will always be innocent in their nature, ſo they will be no otherwiſe regarded than as means to fit us for the repetition of our work. If our friends or country demand our ſervice, we ſhall not give place to ſelfiſhneſs and indolence, but, as lovers of GOD and men, generouſly exert ourſelves for the common good. Thus will our whole life be religion, upon ſuch a ſincere, entire, and affectionate dedication of ourſelves to the LORD. And ſuch as is our courſe ſo will be its end. When the date of time is concluded we ſhall alſo " die to the LORD." This in general imports, our living under the rational, affecting impreſſion of our diſſolution, and appearing before GOD, and our conſtant endeavours after actual preparation to enjoy him for ever. Then, upon the approach of death, we ſhall confidently " commit our ſpirits into " his hands," recommend his ways to ſurvivors, and glorify him with our dying breath.

But,

(*i*) Heb. x. 19.

But, on the other hand, if our lives are not thus conſecrated to our GOD, we cannot be ſuppoſed to perform any duty in an acceptable manner, as the requiſite principle and end are wanting. He, to whom the ſecret ſprings of action are all obvious, will not, cannot accept pretended ſervices; nor be pleaſed with the "blind and the lame for ſacrifice," when the beſt are eſteemed too good for him. To compliment him with our lips, when we refuſe to give him our hearts, will be judged ſimilar to the conduct of thoſe, who "bowed "the knee in deriſion," and in deriſion ſaid, "Hail! "King of the Jews!" He, "with whom we have "to do," cannot be deceived, nor will be mocked. He requires "Truth in the inward parts," which cannot ſubſiſt without an honeſt and upright *deſign* to ſerve him all the days of our lives.

Now to live wholly to the LORD, will appear to be our *reaſonable ſervice*, if we conſider, 1. That "ſuch "a life is moſt worthy of rational and immortal crea-"tures." From the powers and faculties given us it may naturally be concluded that we are created for ſome very important purpoſe; but what can be ſo important, or bear ſo juſt a correſpondence to our capacities, as to live to the glory of our great Creator? This being our ultimate end, to which we refer all our actions, and perform each of them in ſuch a manner as may beſt anſwer it, will influence our hearts, and frame our whole converſation agreeable to the divine approving will. And what can ſo ennoble the ſoul as conformity to the pattern of perfection? But to neglect this, and chiefly regard our temporal affairs, would be infinitely unworthy of beings capable of the higheſt purſuits, and formed for immortality. Why ſhould we have been "wiſer than the beaſts of the field, or the fowls "of heaven," if we are to have no ſublimer aims than they? In a word, we could never vindicate the wiſdom of GOD in our formation, if he intended us for meaner things than thoſe for which we are qualified. Therefore,

2. "Such a life is moſt worthy of GOD our Maker." Nothing can appear more condecent and proper, than that he who is *the beginning*, ſhould alſo be the *end*; that as all are *of him*, all ſhould be *to him*. And if his glory be the moſt excellent thing, and He the moſt perfect Being, it will neceſſarily follow, that he *cannot* ultimately deſign what is leſs excellent. Therefore the ſcripture ſpeaks agreeable to everlaſting truth, when it aſſerts, that "he made all things for himſelf;" and, that "for his pleaſure they are, and were created."*(k)* And can it be rationally ſuppoſed, that he allows us, whom he made for his own glory, to act for a different or oppoſite end? It cannot. We muſt therefore peremptorily affirm, that he cannot, in conſiſtency with his perfections, require leſs, than that "whether we "eat or drink, or whatever we do, we ſhould do all "to his glory."*(l)* And this he does require, not becauſe he needs our ſervice, or can be happier, or more glorious in himſelf by our praiſes, but becauſe it is fit and right, and reſults as our duty from the eternal reaſon of things.

3. "Such a life is our own happineſs:" for, acting as preſcribed, we move in our proper ſphere, and tend to our native centre. We live as near the fountain of bleſſedneſs as our preſent ſtate can admit, and nothing can be ſo animating as the glorious and bliſsful proſpects our courſe affords. Our hearts, being fixed on *the chief good*, are at reſt, and no more tortured with anxious heſitation, and uneaſy ſuſpenſe, as to what we ſhall chuſe for our portion, nor do our deſires wander in queſt of a more ſuitable object. We can wiſh for no more but the full enjoyment of GOD, whom we "ſerve "with our ſpirits;" whoſe "peace, that paſſeth all "underſtanding, rules in our hearts;" and for whoſe glory we hope, ſecure from confounding diſappointment in the day of the LORD.

Now methinks every attentive hearer prevents my improvement of the ſubject, being ready, of his own accord

(*k*) Rev. iv. 11. (*l*) 1 Cor. x. 31.

accord to make ſuch reflections as theſe.—How ſerene and placid is the life, and how triumphant muſt be the death, of a true Chriſtian!—How reaſonable a ſervice do we perform, when we conſecrate ourſelves to the LORD, and receive him, freely offering himſelf to be our portion, our father, and our friend! None can plauſibly urge, that ſome things unfit, or detrimental, are required. None can pretend a conſcientious ſcruple about complying with the propoſal, nor dare any, however ſecretly reluctant, openly avow their diſſent. Every mouth is ſtopped, and all acknowledge their obligation to this plain duty. What then ſhould hinder the unanimous agreement of this whole aſſembly to ſo advantageous an overture? Why may we not join ourſelves, this day, to the LORD in an everlaſting covenant? Would it not ſeem uncharitable to ſuppoſe, that any one in this chriſtian audience rejects a propoſal ſo infinitely juſt and kind? How pleaſing is the very imagination of an univerſal concurrence! Not only would each of our hearts who are here preſent exult, but unnumbered hoſts of angels, and all "the ſpirits of juſt "men made perfect" would rejoice.

Since therefore all things that pertain to our preſent or future happineſs, conſpire to urge this point, let us with one accord, in the moſt affectionate and reverent manner, approach the throne of our auguſt Sovereign, and cheerfully reſign ourſelves to him for ever; ſpend our lives in his ſervice, and expect his compenſating approbation at our end.

In ſome ſuch ſtrain, but more diffuſive and ſublime, would our reverend and dear deceaſed Friend have addreſſed us on ſuch a ſubject. We may imagine how fervent his deſire was of "living to the LORD" himſelf, and perſuading others to the ſame courſe, when he fixed on this for the ſubject of his Funeral Sermon. Now, as it is generally agreed that example has the moſt powerful influence, perhaps a few ſketches of his own Life and Character may beſt recommend the preceding diſcourſe, as they will prove the life deſcribed

to

to be practicable. And though he on whom this taſk is devolved owns himſelf inferior to it, yet he is encouraged to undertake it from a perſuaſion, that a ſimple and unornamented narrative of what he knows, either perſonally or by certain information, concerning Preſident *Davies*, will ſet him in a very agreeable point of light. He is now diſintereſted in all the praiſes and cenſures of mortals, and can neither receive benefit, or ſuffer detriment by them; but his example may profit the living, as it tends to excite a laudable emulation; and ſome brief hints of the diſpenſations of divine providence towards him may not be without very uſeful inſtruction.

He was an only ſon, and, which is more, was a ſon of prayers and vows; was given in anſwer to fervent ſupplications, and, in gratitude, wholly devoted to GOD from the womb by his eminently pious mother, and named *Samuel*, on the like occaſion as the ancient Prophet. The event proved, that GOD accepted the conſecrated Boy, took him under his ſpecial care, furniſhed him for, and employed him in the ſervice of his church, proſpered his labours with remarkable ſucceſs, and not only bleſſed him, but made himſelf a bleſſing.

The firſt twelve years of his life were waſted in the moſt entire negligence of GOD and Religion, which he often afterwards bitterly lamented, as having too "long "wrought the will of the fleſh." But about that time the GOD to whom he was dedicated by his Word and Spirit awakened him to ſolemn thoughtfulneſs, and anxious concern about his eternal ſtate. He then ſaw ſufficient reaſon to dread all the direful effects of divine diſpleaſure againſt ſin. And ſo deeply imprinted was the rational ſenſe of his danger, as to make him habitually uneaſy and reſtleſs, until he might obtain ſatisfying ſcriptural evidence of his intereſt in the forgiving love of GOD.

While thus exerciſed he clearly ſaw the abſolute neceſſity, and certain reality of the goſpel-plan of ſalvation, and what abundant and ſuitable proviſion it makes for

for all the wants of a ſinner. No other ſolid ground of hope, or unfailing ſource of comfort could he find, beſides the merits and righteouſneſs of him, "whom "GOD ſet forth to be a propitiation for ſin, through faith "in his blood."*(m)* On this righteouſneſs he was enabled confidently to depend; by this blood his conſcience was purged from guilt; and "believing, he re-"joiced with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory."*(n)* Yet he was afterwards exerciſed with many perplexing doubts for a long ſeaſon, but at length, after years of impartial repeated ſelf-examination, he attained to a ſettled confidence of his intereſt in redeeming Grace, which he retained to the end.

A dairy, which he kept in the firſt years of his religious life, and continued to keep as long as his leiſure would permit, clearly ſhews how intenſely his mind was ſet on heavenly things; how obſervant he was of the temper of his heart; and how watchful over all his thoughts, words, and actions. Did any cenſure his foibles, or juvenile indiſcretions? They would have done it compaſſionately, had they known how ſeverely he cenſured them himſelf. The tribunal daily erected in his own boſom was more critical in ſcrutinizing, and more impartial and ſevere in paſſing ſentence, than either his friends or enemies could be.

His love to GOD, and tender concern for periſhing ſinners, excited his eager deſire of being in a ſituation to ſerve mankind to the beſt advantage. With this view he engaged in the purſuit of learning, in which, amidſt many obvious inconveniences, he made ſurpriſing progreſs, and, ſooner than could have been expected, was found competently qualified for the miniſterial office. He paſſed the uſual previous trials with uncommon approbation; having exceeded the raiſed expectations of his moſt intimate friends and admirers.

When he was licenſed to preach the goſpel, he zealouſly declared the counſel of GOD, the truth and importance of which he knew by happy experience; and did

(*m*) Rom. iii. 25. (*n*) 1 Pet. i. 8.

did it in ſuch a manner as excited the earneſt deſires of every vacant congregation, where he was known, to obtain the happineſs of his ſtated miniſtrations. But, far from gratifying his natural inclination to the ſociety of his friends, or conſulting his eaſe, moved by conſcience of duty, he undertook the ſelf-denying charge of a diſſenting congregation in *Virginia*, ſeparated from all his Brethren, and expoſed to the cenſure and reſentment of many. But the more he was known in thoſe parts, the more were prejudices removed; contempt was gradually turned into reverence; the number of his enemies daily diminiſhed, and his friends increaſed.

Nor did he there labour in vain, or "ſpend his "ſtrength for nought." The "LORD, who counted "him faithful, putting him into the miniſtry," ſucceeded his faithful endeavours, ſo that a great number, both of *whites* and *blacks*, were hopefully converted to the living GOD: for the proof of this, I muſt refer you to his own narrative, ſent to the Rev. Mr. *Bellamy*, and by him publiſhed, and to his letters to ſome gentlemen of *the Society in* London *for propagating Religion among the Poor*.

As to his natural genius, it was ſtrong and maſculine. His underſtanding was clear; his memory retentive; his invention quick; his imagination lively and florid; his thoughts ſublime; and his language elegant, ſtrong, and expreſſive. And I cannot but preſume that true and candid critics will readily diſcern a great degree of true poetic fire, ſtile, and imagery, in his poetical compoſitions; and will grant that he was capable to have ſhone in that way, had his leiſure permitted the due cultivation of his natural talent.

His appearance in company was manly and graceful; his behaviour genteel, not ceremonious; grave, yet pleaſant; and ſolid, but ſprightly too. In a word, he was an open, converſable, and entertaining Companion, a polite Gentleman, and devout Chriſtian, at once.

In the ſacred Deſk, zeal for GOD, and love to men, animated his addreſſes, and made them tender, ſolemn, pungent,

pungent, and perſuaſive; while at the ſame time they were ingenious, accurate, and oratorial. A certain dignity of ſentiment and ſtile, a venerable preſence, a commanding voice, and emphatical delivery, concurred both to charm his audience, and overawe them into ſilence and attention.

Nor was his uſefulneſs confined to the Pulpit. His comprehenſive mind could take under view the grand intereſts of his Country and of Religion at once; and theſe intereſts, as well as thoſe of his Friends, he was ever ready zealouſly to ſerve. It is known what an active inſtrument he was in ſtirring up a patriot ſpirit, a ſpirit of courage and reſolution in *Virginia*, where he reſided during the late barbarous *French* and *Indian* ravages.

His natural temper was remarkably ſweet and diſpaſſionate;* and his heart was one of the tendereſt towards the diſtreſſed. His ſympathetic ſoul could ſay, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" Accordingly his charitable diſpoſition made him liberal to the poor, and that often beyond his ability. He was eminently obliging to all, and very ſenſible of favours conferred; which he could receive without ſervility, and manifeſt his grateful ſenſe of them with proper dignity.

To his friend he was voluntarily tranſparent, and fully acted up to the *Poet*'s advice:

> Thy friend put in thy boſom: wear his eyes
> Still in thy heart, that he may ſee what's there.

And perhaps none better underſtood the ingenuities and delicacies of friendſhip, or had an higher reliſh for it, or was truer or more conſtant in it than he. He was not eaſily diſguſted: his knowledge of human nature in its preſent ſtate, his candid heart, and enlarged ſoul both diſpoſing and enabling him to make allowances for indiſcretions, which narrower and more ſelfiſh minds could

* The Rev. Mr. *John Rodgers*, one of his moſt intimate friends, in a letter to me ſince his death, ſays, "I never ſaw him angry during "ſeveral years of unbounded intimacy, though I have repeatedly "known him to have been ungenerouſly treated."

could not make. He readily and eaſily forgave offences againſt himſelf, whilſt none could be more careful to avoid offending others; which, if he at any time inadvertently did, he was forward and deſirous to make the moſt ample ſatisfaction.

He was amongſt the firſt and brighteſt examples of filial piety, a very indulgent parent, and humane maſter. As an huſband he was kind, tender, cordial, and reſpectful, with a fondneſs that was manly and genuine. In a word, think what might rationally be expected, in the preſent imperfect ſtate, in a mature Man, a Chriſtian in minority, a Miniſter of JESUS of like paſſions with others, in a Gentleman, Companion, and cordial Friend, and you conceive of Preſident *Davies*.

It would hardly be expected, that one ſo rigid with reſpect to his own faith and practice, could be ſo generous and catholic in his ſentiments of thoſe who differed from him in both, as he was. He was ſtrict, not bigoted; conſcientious, not ſqueamiſhly ſcrupulous. His clear and extenſive knowledge of religion enabled him to diſcern where the main ſtreſs ſhould be laid, and to proportion his zeal to the importance of things, too generous to be confined to the intereſts of a party as ſuch. He conſidered the viſible kingdom of CHRIST as extended beyond the boundaries of *this* or *that* particular denomination, and never ſuppoſed that his declarative glory was wholly dependent on the religious community which he moſt approved. Hence he gloried more in being a Chriſtian, than in being a *Preſbyterian*, though he was the latter from principle. His truly catholic addreſs to the eſtabliſhed Clergy of *Virginia* is a demonſtration of the ſincere pleaſure it would have given him, to have heard that "CHRIST was preached," and ſubſtantial religion, common Chriſtianity, promoted by thoſe who "walked not with him," and whom he judged in other points to be miſtaken. His benevolent heart could not be ſo ſoured, nor his enlarged ſoul ſo contracted, as to value men from circumſtantial diſtinctions, but according to their perſonal worth.

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He ſought truth for its own ſake, and would profeſs his ſentiments with the undiſguiſed openneſs of an honeſt Chriſtian, and the inoffenſive boldneſs of a manly ſpirit: yet, without the leaſt apparent difficulty or heſitation, he would retract an opinion on full conviction of its being a miſtake. I have never known one, who appeared to lay himſelf more fully open to the reception of truth, from whatever quarter it came, than he; for he judged the knowledge of truth only to be real learning, and that endeavouring to defend an error was but labouring to be more ignorant. But, until fully convinced, he was becomingly tenacious of his opinion.

The unavoidable conſciouſneſs of native power made him bold and enterprizing. Yet the event proved that his boldneſs aroſe not from a partial, groundleſs ſelf-conceit, but from true ſelf-knowledge. Upon fair and candid trial, faithful and juſt to himſelf, he judged what he could do; and what he could, when called to it, he attempted; and what he attempted he accompliſhed.

It may here be properly obſerved, that he was choſen by the Synod of *New-York*, at the inſtance of the Truſtees of *New-Jerſey* College, as a fit perſon to accompany the Rev. Mr. *Gilbert Tennent* to *Great-Britain* and *Ireland*, in order to ſolicit benefactions for the ſaid college. As this manifeſted the high opinion which both the Synod and Corporation entertained of his popular talents and ſuperior abilities, ſo his ready compliance to undertake that ſervice, hazardous and difficult in itſelf, and precarious in its conſequences, which required him to overlook his domeſtic connections, however tender and endearing, manifeſted his reſolution and ſelf-denial. How well he was qualified as a ſolicitor, is witneſſed by the numerous and large benefactions he received. His ſervices, as was meet, were gratefully accepted by his conſtituents; and to the pious, generous, and public-ſpirited charity of the friends of Religion and Learning in *Great-Britain*, received on that

occaſion, does the college of *New-Jerſey*, in a great degree, owe its preſent flouriſhing condition.

As his light ſhone, his abilities to fill the Preſident's chair in this College, then vacant, was not doubted by the honourable board of Truſtees. He was accordingly choſen, and earneſtly invited to accept the charge of this Society. Yet he once and again excuſed himſelf, not being convinced that he was called in duty to leave his then important province. But repeated application at length prevailed to make him apprehend that it was the will of GOD he ſhould accept the call; yet, leſt he ſhould miſtake in ſo important a caſe, he withheld his expreſs conſent, until the Reverend Synod of *New-York* and *Philadelphia* gave their opinion in favour of the College. This determined his dubious mind. He came, and undertook the weighty charge.

And what were the conſequences? had his inceſſant labours in travelling and preaching the goſpel, his diſadvantageous ſituation, and want of opportunity for improvement made ſome of his beſt friends diffident of his capacity and acquirements for moving with honour in this unaccuſtomed ſphere? He agreeably diſappointed their friendly fears, and convinced them that ſtrength of genius, joined to induſtrious application, had ſurmounted all other diſadvantages. Had any ſuch raiſed expectations as ſeemed hard to anſwer? they were fully ſatisfied: ſo that from being highly approved he came to be admired.

His manner of conducting the College did honour to himſelf, and promoted its intereſts. Whatever alterations in the plans of education he introduced were confeſſedly improvements on thoſe of his predeceſſors. Had I never had other means of intelligence, ſave only my knowledge of the man, I ſhould naturally have expected that all his public appearances would have been conducted with ſpirit, elegance, and decorum; that his government would be mild and gentle, tempered with wiſdom and authority, and calculated to command reverence

verence while it attracted love, and that his manner of teaching would be agreeable and ſtriking.

But I propoſe not theſe as mere conjectures. The learned Tutors of the College, the partners of his counſels and deliberations for its good, and theſe young Gentlemen, once his care and charge, who judged themſelves happy under his tuition, all know more than I ſhall ſpeak.

You know the tenderneſs and condeſcenſion with which he treated you; the paternal care with which he watched over you; the reluctance with which he at any time inflicted the preſcribed puniſhment on a delinquent; and how pleaſed he was to ſucceed in reforming any abuſe by private and eaſy methods. You felt yourſelves voluntarily confined by the reſtraints of love, and obliged to ſubjection, not from ſlaviſh fear, but from principle and inclination. You have yet freſh in memory his inſtructive Lectures, and can tell with what eaſe he communicated his ſentiments, and impreſſed his ideas on your minds, and the entertaining manner in which he would repreſent even a common thought.

But his perſuaſive voice you will hear no more. He is removed far from mortals, has taken his *ærial flight*, and left us to lament, that "a great man is fallen in "Iſrael!"* He lived much in a little time; "he "finiſhed his courſe," performed ſooner than many others his aſſigned taſk, and, in that view, might be ſaid to have died mature. He ſhone like a light ſet in a high place, that burns out and expires.

He went through every ſtage of honour and uſefulneſs, compatible to his character as a diſſenting Clergyman: and, while we flattered our fond hopes of eminent ſervices from him for many years to come, the fatal blow was ſtruck: our pleaſing proſpects are all at an end, and he is cut down like a tree that had yielded much fruit, and was loaden with bloſſoms even in its fall.

This diſpenſation, how myſterious! how aſtoniſhing! nay, how diſcouraging does it ſeem! Why was he raiſed,

raiſed, by Divine Providence, in the prime of life, to ſo important a ſtation, and, amidſt uſeful labours, whilſt he was faſt increaſing in ſtrength adapted to his buſineſs, quickly ſnatched away? This is a perplexing caſe; and the more ſo that it ſo ſoon ſucceeded the yet ſhorter continuance of the venerable *Edwards*. Were they ſet in ſo conſpicuous a point of view, only that their imitable excellencies might be more obſervable? or, was *Naſſau-Hall* erected by Divine Providence for this, among other important purpoſes, that it might ſerve to adorn the latter end of ſome eminent ſervants of the living GOD, itſelf being adorned by them? In this view, the ſhort Preſidency of a *Dickinſon*, a *Burr*, an *Edwards*, and a *Davies*, inſtead of arguing the diſpleaſure of the Almighty, will evidence His peculiar favour to this inſtitution; which I know was planned, and has been carried on with the moſt pious, benevolent, and generous deſigns. Theſe deſigns GOD's goodneſs has hitherto amazingly proſpered, amidſt apparent frowns; and, if we may infer any thing from what he has already done, it is an encouraging expectation that he will continue to bleſs this Society, and make it an honour and happineſs to this venerable Board to have been engaged in ſo noble and ſucceſsful an undertaking.

Now one more ſhining orb is ſet on our world. *Davies* is departed, and with him all that love, zeal, activity, and benevolence, for which he was remarkable. This the Church, and this the bereaved College mourns. For this we hang our once cheerful harps, and indulge to plaintive ſtrains. Yet we are not to lament as thoſe who are hopeleſs, but rather with humble confidence to "pray the LORD of the harveſt," with whom is "the reſidue of the Spirit," that he would ſend forth another *Davies* to aſſiſt our labour and forward his work.

Nor ſhould the deceaſe of uſeful labourers, the extinction of burning and ſhining lights, only ſend us to the throne of grace for ſupplies, but excite us to greater diligence

diligence and activity in our buſineſs, as we have for the preſent the more to do. And, inſtead of being diſpirited by the loſs of ſuch eminent aſſiſtants, we ſhould be animated by their example, and hope for the ſame divine aids that carried them through all the duties and dangers of life with ſafety, ſucceſs, and honour.

Finally, this diſpenſation ſhould leſſen our eſteem of this tranſitory diſappointing world, and raiſe our affections to Heaven, that place and ſtate of permanent bleſſedneſs. Thither aſcends, as to its native home, all the goodneſs that departs from earth: and the more of our pious friends that go to glory, ſo many more ſecondary motives have we to excite our deſires of "de-"parting and being with CHRIST; which is far better" than any ſtate under the ſun: for there, in addition to ſuperior felicity, "we ſhall come to the general aſſem-"bly, and church of the firſt-born who are written "in Heaven,—and to the ſpirits of juſt men made "perfect."*(o)* *Amen.*

(*o*) Heb. xiii. 23.

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APPENDIX.

THE following facts, drawn up by a gentleman, who was Mr. *Davies*'s intimate Friend, and lived in the ſame town with him, while he was Preſident of the College, were collected partly from Mr. *Davies*'s private papers, and partly from the gentleman's perſonal knowledge, and, as they illuſtrate ſeveral things juſt hinted in the preceding diſcourſe, and contain ſome anecdotes not before mentioned, may be properly ſubjoined to the narrative already given.

The Rev. Mr. *Samuel Davies*, late Preſident of the College of *New-Jerſey*, was born on the 3d day of *November*, *A. D.* 1724, in the county of *Newcaſtle*, on *Delaware*. His father was a planter, who lived with great plainneſs and ſimplicity, and ſupported the character of an honeſt and pious man to his death; which happened about two years ago. His mother, who is ſtill living*, and greatly diſtinguiſhed for her eminent piety, ſome time before the conception of this favourite only ſon, earneſtly deſired ſuch a bleſſing; and as ſhe then had only borne a daughter, who was near five years old, ſhe had ſpecial occaſion for the exerciſe of her faith, in waiting for the divine anſwer to her petition. In this ſituation ſhe took example from the mother of the prophet *Samuel*, and "Vowed a vow unto the "LORD; that if he would indeed give her a man-"child, ſhe would devote him to his ſervice all the days "of his life."(*p*)

It

* The reader is deſired to obſerve that the following account was drawn up ſome years ago, ſince which time I find it has pleaſed Providence to remove from our world the Mother of Mr. *Davies*, who is mentioned as living by the writer of the *Appendix*.

(*p*) 1 Sam. i. 11.

It may well be ſuppoſed that the parents received this child as from GOD, and that the mother eſpecially, who had reaſon to look upon him as a token of the divine favour, and an expreſs anſwer to her prayers, would, with the greateſt tenderneſs, begin the rearing of this beloved plant. As there was no ſchool in the neighbourhood, ſhe herſelf taught him to read: and, although he was then very young, he is ſaid to have made ſuch proficiency as ſurpriſed every perſon who heard it.

He continued at home with his parents till he was about ten years old; during which time he appeared to have no remarkable impreſſions of a religious kind; but behaving himſelf as is common for a ſprightly towardly child, under the influence of pious example and inſtruction. He was then ſent to an Engliſh ſchool, at ſome diſtance from his father's, where he continued two years, and made great progreſs in his learning; but, for want of the pious inſtruction with which he was favoured at home, he grew ſomewhat more careleſs of the things of religion.

It appears, that about this time of life, careleſs as he was, he made a practice of ſecret prayer, eſpecially in the evening. The reaſons (as he tells it in his diary) why he was ſo punctual in the evening was, that "he "feared leſt he ſhould perhaps die before morning." What is farther obſervable in his prayers at this time is, that "he was more ardent in his ſupplications for be- "ing introduced into the Goſpel-Miniſtry, than for "any other thing."

[It is here preſumed that Dr. *Finley*'s Sermon, preached on occaſion of his Death, by deſire of the Truſtees, contains ſufficient Memorials of his Life, from the time in which it pleaſed GOD more deeply to impreſs his mind with the important realities of another world, until he was elected Preſident of the College.]

It may perhaps not be amiſs to mention that when he returned home from his voyage to *Great-Britain*, he entered again on his laborious and beloved taſk of preach-

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ing the Goſpel to his ſeveral Congregations; and continued in this work until the year 1759, when he was elected Preſident of the College of *New-Jerſey*, in the room of the Rev. Mr. *Jonathan Edwards*. The College, before he came, had been in an unhappy ſituation; partly owing to the length of that melancholy period between the death of Preſident *Burr* and his acceſſion, and partly to the evil diſpoſitions and practices of a few members of the Society. Preſident *Burr* died in *September*, 1757: and although Mr. *Edwards* was elected a few days after, he did not take upon himſelf the government of the College till *February*, 1758; and about a fortnight after took the ſmall-pox, of which he died in *March* following. Mr. *Davies* was not initiated in his office till the latter end of *July*, 1759. So that the College lay under the obvious diſadvantages of a bereaved condition for almoſt two years. But the prudent meaſures taken by Preſident *Davies* ſoon ſurmounted theſe diſadvantages; ſo that in a few months a ſpirit of emulation in Learning and Morality, as had been uſual, evidently characterized the Students of *Naſſau-Hall*.

While he continued Preſident his labours were great, and his application to ſtudy was neceſſarily more intenſe than that of his predeceſſors. For he came to this ſeat of the Muſes, when its learning, by the eminent abilities of Preſident *Burr*, was advanced to a very conſiderable degree; and he had juſt emerged from a ſea of miniſterial labour in various places, wherein a common Genius would have been able to have made but little improvement in academical learning. Beſides, the ſpeedy paſſage he made through the courſe of his ſtudies, previous to his entering into the miniſtry, made his after application the more neceſſary for ſo important and elevated a ſituation. He was determined not to degrade his office, but to be in reality what his ſtation ſuppoſed him, and accordingly exerted himſelf to the utmoſt. The labours of the day ſeemed to him rather an incentive to ſtudy than to reſt

in the night; for he commonly ſat up till twelve o'clock, and often later, although he roſe by break of day. The ſucceſs was proportionable; for by the mighty efforts of his great genius, and by dint of induſtry, he left the College of *New-Jerſey*, at his death, in as high a ſtate of literary merit as it ever had been in ſince its firſt inſtitution.

It is a piece of juſtice due to his memory to remark, that the few innovations he made in the academical exerciſes, were certainly improvements upon the plans of his predeceſſors. Among other things the monthly Orations he inſtituted deſerve particular notice. In order to give his Pupils a taſte for compoſition, and to form them for public ſpeaking, he directed the members of the ſenior claſs each to chooſe his ſubject, and compoſe a popular harangue to be delivered publicly in the College-Hall before the Maſters and Students, and as many of the inhabitants of the town as choſe to attend. When each had written his diſcourſe, he brought it to the Preſident, who made ſuch obſervations and corrections as he judged proper; and, after their diſcourſes were ſpoken, they ſeverally attended him again for his remarks on their delivery. About ſix of the young Gentlemen uſually delivered their Orations in the afternoon of the firſt *Wedneſday* in every Month, to crowded audiences; and it is hard to ſay, whether the entertainment of the hearers, or the improvement of the ſtudents, was the greater.

There is reaſon to believe, that the intenſe application with which Mr. *Davies* attended to the duties of his office was one great cauſe of his death. The habit of his body was plethoric: and it is not to be doubted but that his health for ſome years had very much depended upon the exerciſe of riding, to which he was neceſſarily obliged while he lived in *Virginia*, though even then he had ſeveral ſevere fevers, ſuppoſed to ariſe principally from his application to ſtudy in the intervals of riding abroad. When he came to the College he ſcarcely uſed any bodily exerciſe, ſave what was requir-

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ed in going from his own houſe to *Naſſau-Hall*, which is a ſpace about ten rods, five or ſix times a day.

In the latter end of *January*, A. D. 1761, a bad cold ſeized him, and for his relief he was bled. The ſame day he tranſcribed for the preſs the Sermon, which was ſoon after publiſhed, on the death of the late King, and the day after preached twice in the College-Hall; by all which the arm, in which he was bled, became much inflamed, and increaſed his former indiſpoſition. On the *Monday* morning after, at breakfaſt, he was ſeized with a violent chilly fit, which was ſucceeded by an inflammatory fever, and, in ten days brought on the period of his important life.

Although premonitions of Death in the preſent ſtate of the world are ſeldom, if ever, given to mankind; and they who are diſpoſed to interpret ordinary occurrences into ſuch premonitions, when, by ſomething ſimilar in the event thoſe occurrences would ſeem as if predictive, generally diſcover their weakneſs; yet the circumſtances of the death of an eminent perſon are commonly very acceptable to the public, and for this reaſon it may not be amiſs to mention an anecdote which Mr. *Davies* more than once took notice of in his laſt ſickneſs.

An intimate Friend of his, a few days before the beginning of the year in which he died, in converſation told him, that a Sermon would be expected from him on the new year's day; and, among other things, happened to mention that the late Preſident *Burr*, on the firſt day of the year wherein he died, preached a Sermon on *Jer.* xxviii. 16, *Thus ſaith the* LORD, *This year thou ſhalt die*; and after his death, the people took occaſion to ſay it was premonitory; upon which Mr. *Davies* obſerved, that "although it ought not to be "viewed in that light, yet it was very remarkable." When new year's day came he preached; and the congregation were not a little ſurprized at his taking the ſame text of ſcripture. Upon his being taken with his laſt ſickneſs, about three weeks after, he ſoon adverted

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to this circumſtance, and mentioned it as remarkable that he had been undeſignedly led to preach, as it were, his own Funeral Sermon.

It is much to be lamented that the violence of the diſorder, of which this excellent man died, deprived him of the regular exerciſe of his reaſon the greater part of the time of his ſickneſs, otherwiſe the public would undoubtedly have been gratified with his remarks on the views of an approaching eternity, and would have received another evidence of the ſuperior excellency and power of that Religion, which alone can ſupport the ſoul, and make the, otherwiſe gloomy, proſpect of death cheerful. For the iſſues of this deciſive period his life had been eminently calculated from his youth. It abundantly appears, that from twelve or fourteen years of age, he had continually maintained the ſtricteſt watch over his thoughts and actions, and daily lived under a deep ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, of the tranſcendent excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, of the great importance of a public ſpirit, and the neceſſity of exerting it in promoting the general good. Even in his *delirium* his mind diſcovered the favourite objects of his concern, the proſperity of CHRIST's Church, and the good of mankind. His bewildered brain was continually imagining, and his faultering tongue expreſſing ſome expedient for theſe important purpoſes. Alas! for us that ſo great a light could no longer continue in this dark world!

DIVINE

DIVINE CONDUCT VINDICATED;

OR, THE

OPERATIONS OF GOD

SHOWN TO BE THE

OPERATIONS OF WISDOM:

IN THE SUBSTANCE OF

TWO DISCOURSES,

PREACHED AT

HABERDASHERS-HALL,

LONDON, MARCH 29, 1761.

OCCASIONED BY THE DECEASE OF THE

REV. SAMUEL DAVIES, *A. M.*

And Preſident of the College of *Naſſau-Hall*, in *New-Jerſey*.

BY THOMAS GIBBONS, *D. D.*

Sive tribulemur & auguſtemur, ſive lætemur, & exultemus, Deus laudandus eſt, qui & in Tribulationibus erudit, & in Lætitia conſolatur. Laus enim Dei à Corde & Ore Chriſtiani recedere non debet, non ut laudet in proſperis, & maledicat in adverſis: ſed quemadmodum Pſalmus ille ſcribit, ſemper Laus ejus in Ore meo. Gaudes, agnoſce Patrem blandientem: tribularis, agnoſce Patrem emendantem: ſive blandiatur, ſive emendet, eum erudit, cui parat Hæreditatem.

AUGUSTIN. in Pſal. liv.

EPHES. i. 11.

—Who works all things after the counſel of his own will.

THE laſt week gave me the awful aſſurance of the ſudden and unexpected death of that moſt excellent and amiable man and miniſter of JESUS CHRIST, the Rev. Mr. *Samuel Davies*, Preſident of the college of *Naſſau-Hall*, in *New-Jerſey*, by a moſt moving and melting letter from a gentleman of *Philadelphia*, an acquaintance of Mr. *Davies*, and who well knew his worth, to a correſpondent of the gentleman's here in *London*.

A greater loſs, all things conſidered, could not perhaps befal the church of GOD in the death of a ſingle perſon. The GOD of nature had endowed Mr. *Davies* with extraordinary talents. Perhaps in ſublimity and ſtrength of genius there were very few, if any, who ſurpaſſed him. To the brighteſt and richeſt intellects Mr. *Davies* had ſuperadded the improvements of ſcience, and a large acquaintance with books, and poſſibly, had he lived, there would have been ſcarcely a man in our world a more accompliſhed Divine, or a more eminent Scholar. His character in life was wonderfully accommodated both to his natural and acquired abilities. He was Preſident of *New-Jerſey* college, in the diſcharge of which office there would have been a demand for the exertion of his amazing talents, and the exhibition of all his treaſures of literature and knowledge. Thus, as he was a ſtar of the firſt magnitude, ſo he was placed in a ſituation where he might have ſhone without any waſte of his diſtinguiſhed and ſupereminent glories.

But what crowned all, or advanced his diſtinction as a man and a ſcholar, into the higheſt value and luſtre, was, that his pious character appeared not at all inferior to his great intellects, and acquired accompliſhments.

Nay,

Nay, (let me not be thought, for I intimately knew him, to exceed the limits of truth in the ardor of my friendſhip) his pious character as much ſurpaſſed all elſe that was remarkable in him, as the ſparkling eye in the countenance of a great genius does all the other features of the face. If Mr. *Davies*'s good ſenſe and learning were *the pictures of ſilver*, his graces and virtues were *the apples of gold.* (*a*)

Here let me ſtay awhile; and, though I ſhall only give you a few outlines of his piety and amiable diſpoſition, yet let me be allowed to preſent you with ſuch a view of him as ſhall not only be ſufficient to demonſtrate him to be the beſt of men and miniſters, but as ſhall leave room for you to conclude that great additions might be made to his character by perſons who had a longer acquaintance with him than myſelf, and the collected teſtimonies of the friends who were favoured with his intimate correſpondence.

He informed me in one of his letters, for I was honoured with a cloſe intimacy with him ſeveral years, "That he was bleſſed with a mother whom he might "account, without filial vanity or partiality, one of the "moſt eminent ſaints he ever knew upon earth. And "here, ſays he, I cannot but mention to my friend an "anecdote known but to few, that is, that I am a ſon "of prayer, like my name-ſake *Samuel* the prophet; "and my mother called me *Samuel* becauſe, ſhe ſaid, I "have aſked him of the LORD, 1 *Sam.* i. 20. This "early dedication to GOD has always been a ſtrong in-"ducement to me to devote myſelf to Him by my "own perſonal act; and the moſt important bleſſings "of my life I have looked upon as immediate anſwers "to the prayers of a pious mother. But, alas! what "a degenerate plant am I! How unworthy of ſuch a "parent, and ſuch a birth!"

From the accounts Mr. *Davies* gave of himſelf in the converſation that paſſed between us when he was here in *England*, I learnt, as the inference from related fact,

(*a*) Prov. xxv. 11.

fact, that he muſt have been very aſſiduous in his ſtudies. When he was about entering the miniſtry, or had not long entered upon it, if I remember right, he was judged to be in a deep and irrecoverable conſumption. Finding himſelf upon the borders of the grave, and without any hopes of recovery, he determined to ſpend the little remains of an almoſt exhauſted life, as he apprehended it, in endeavouring to advance his maſter's glory in the good of ſouls. Accordingly he removed from the place where he was to another about an hundred miles diſtance, that was then in want of a miniſter. Here he laboured in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon; and, as he told me, preached in the day, and had his hectic fever by night, and that to ſuch a degree as to be ſometimes delirious, and to ſtand in need of perſons to ſit up with him. Here GOD gave him ſome glorious firſt-fruits of his miniſtry, for two inſtances of the converſion of two gentlemen he related to me were very remarkable, and he had the ſatisfaction, as he informed me, to find in the after-accounts of them, that there was good reaſon to believe that they were ſaints indeed: their goodneſs being by no means "like "the graſs upon the houſe tops, which withers afore "it grows up, and with which the mower filleth not "his hand," Pſal. cxxix. 6, 7, but yielding the fruits meet for repentance in an holy and well-ordered converſation.

Afterwards he ſettled in *Virginia*, a colony where profaneneſs and immorality called aloud for his ſacred labours. His patience and perſeverance, his magnanimity and piety, together with his powerful and evangelical miniſtrations, were not without ſucceſs. The wilderneſs and the ſolitary places, in the courſe of his ſtay there, bloomed and bloſſomed before him. His tract of preaching, if I remember right, for ſome time was not leſs than ſixty miles, and by what I have learnt, though not from himſelf, he had but little of this world's goods to repay his zealous and indefatigable labours; but his reward, as he well knew, was in

Heaven; and he felt, I doubt not, the animated joy that every Negro ſlave, which under his miniſtrations became the LORD's freeman, would furniſh an additional jewel to his eternal crown.

Upon the deceaſe of that excellent man the Rev. Mr. *Jonathan Edwards*, Preſident of the college of *Naſſau-Hall*, in *New-Jerſey*, Mr. *Davies* writes me word, that Mr. *Lockwood*, in *New-England*, a gentleman of worthy character, was choſen to fill up the vacancy. "I have not yet heard, ſays Mr. *Davies*, whe-"ther he has accepted the place. The Truſtees were "divided between him, another gentleman, and my-"ſelf, but I happily eſcaped." But ſo it was ordered, by Mr. *Lockwood*'s not accepting the invitation, that Mr. *Davies* was afterwards elected Preſident of the college; and what concern, and indeed what conſternation this choice gave him, his letters to me amply teſtify; and I could particularly relate to you what views he had of things, and what ſteps he took to determine what was his duty. At laſt he accepted the call to his important office of preſiding in the college; and tells me in a letter, dated *June* 6, 1759, "That the evi-"dence of his duty was ſo plain, that even his ſceptical "mind was ſatisfied; and that his people ſaw the hand "of providence in it, and dared not to oppoſe."

Here he was ſettled for about eighteen months; and as he could exerciſe his miniſtry as well as preſide over the college, great things might have been expected from that rare and remarkable union there was in him of what was great and good; and with pleaſure I have received the information from his friends how well he ſupported and adorned his character, and what high expectations were formed as to the benefit and bleſſing he was likely to prove to that ſeminary of religion and learning. "His whole ſoul (ſays the letter that gives "the news of his death) was engaged for the good of "the youth under his care." And again, "*Naſſau-*"*Hall* in tears, diſconſolate, and refuſing to be com-"forted."

But,

But, alas! in the midſt of his days, (little more than thirty-ſix years of age) he was called away from this but opening ſcene of large and extraordinary uſefulneſs to the inviſible world, the world of glory and bleſſedneſs, never to ſojourn in mortal clay, or to irradiate and bleſs the church militant more. He is dead, he is departed—*America* in groans proclaims her inexpreſſible loſs, and we in *Great-Britain* ſhare the diſtreſs, and echo groan for groan.

Thus ended the days on earth of this truly great and good man; having in his little circle of life ſhed more beams, and done more ſervice than many a languid and leſs illuminated ſoul, even in a public ſphere, in the revolution of ſixty or fourſcore years.

Truly great and good I may ſtile him without the ſuſpicion of flattery, and without the flight of hyperbole. Let me call to your remembrance, as proofs of what I ſay, the excellent diſcourſes he has delivered in this pulpil, and the ſeveral Sermons of his which have been publiſhed, ſtrong in manly ſenſe, loaden with full ideas, rich with evangelical truth, and animated with the moſt ſacred fervor for the good of ſouls. And to theſe evidences of the admirable ſpirit that dwelt in him, let me add a few paragraphs from the many letters with which, in the courſe of about nine years correſpondence, he has favoured me.

Speaking in one of his letters concerning his children, he ſays, "I am ſolicitous for them when I con-
"ſider what a contagious world they have entered into,
"and the innate infection of their natures. There is
"nothing that can wound a parent's heart ſo deep, as
"the thought that he ſhould bring up children to diſ-
"honour his GOD here, and be miſerable hereafter. I
"beg your prayers for mine, and you may expect a re-
"taliation in the ſame kind."

In another letter he ſays, "We have now three ſons
"and two daughters; whoſe young minds as they open
"I am endeavouring to cultivate with my own hand,
"unwilling to truſt them to a ſtranger; and I find the
"buſineſs

" buſineſs of education much more difficult than I ex-
" pected.—My dear little creatures ſob and drop a tear
" now and then under my inſtructions, but I am not ſo
" happy as to ſee them under deep and laſting impreſ-
" ſions of religion; and this is the greateſt grief they
" afford me. Grace cannot be communicated by na-
" tural deſcent, and, if it could, they would receive
" but little from me. I earneſtly beg your prayers for
" them."

In another letter, " I deſire ſeriouſly to devote to
" God and my dear country, all the labours of my
" head, my heart, my hand, and pen; and if he pleaſes
" to bleſs any of them I hope I ſhall be thankful, and
" wonder at his condeſcending grace.—Oh! my dear
" brother, could we ſpend and be ſpent all our lives in
" painful, diſintereſted, indefatigable ſervice for God
" and the world, how ſerene and bright would it ren-
" der the ſwift approaching eve of life! I am labouring
" to do a little to ſave my country, and, which is of
" much more conſequence, to ſave ſouls—from death
" —from that tremendous kind of death, which a *ſoul*
" can die. I have but little ſucceſs of late, but bleſſed
" be God, it ſurpaſſes my expectation, and much more
" my deſert. Some of my brethren labour to better
" purpoſe. The pleaſure of the Lord proſpers in their
" hands."

Another epiſtle tells me, " As for myſelf, I am juſt
" ſtriving not to live in vain. I entered the miniſtry
" with ſuch a ſenſe of my unfitneſs for it, that I had
" no ſanguine expectations of ſucceſs. And a conde-
" ſcending God (O, how condeſcending!) has made
" me much more ſerviceable than I could hope. But,
" alas! my brother, I have but little, very little true
" religion. My advancements in holineſs are extreme-
" ly ſmall: I feel what I confeſs, and am ſure it is true,
" and not the rant of exceſſive or affected humility.
" It is an eaſy thing to make a noiſe in the world, to
" flouriſh and harangue, *to dazzle the crowd, and ſet*
" *them all agape*, but deeply to imbibe the ſpirit of
" chriſtianity,

" chriſtianity, to maintain a ſecret walk with GOD, to " be holy as he is holy, this is the labour, this the work. " I beg the aſſiſtance of your prayers in ſo grand and " important an enterprize.—The difficulty of the mi- " niſterial work ſeems to grow upon my hands. Per- " haps once in three or four months I preach in ſome " meaſure as I could wiſh; that is, I preach as in the " ſight of GOD, and as if I were to ſtep from the pul- " pit to the ſupreme tribunal. I *feel* my ſubject. I " melt into tears, or I ſhudder with horror, when I " denounce the terrors of the LORD. I glow, I ſoar " in ſacred extaſies, when the love of JESUS is my " theme, and, as Mr. *Baxter* was wont to expreſs it, " in lines more ſtriking to me than all the fine poetry " in the world,

" I preach as if I ne'er ſhould preach again;
" And as a dying man to dying men.

" But, alas! my ſpirits ſoon flag, my devotions lan- " guiſh, and my zeal cools. It is really an afflictive " thought that I ſerve ſo good a Maſter with ſo much " inconſtancy; but ſo it is, and my ſoul mourns upon " that account."

In another letter he ſays, " I am labouring to do a " little good in the world But, alas! I find I am of " little uſe or importance. I have many defects, but " none gives me ſo much pain and mortification as my " ſlow progreſs in perſonal holineſs. This is the grand " qualification of the office we ſuſtain, as well as for " that heaven we hope for, and I am ſhocked at myſelf " when I ſee how little I have of it."

In another of his letters he acquaints me, " That he " indeed feels an union of hearts which cannot bear " without pain the intervention of the huge *Atlantic*, " nor even the abſence of a week. But our conde- " ſcending LORD, adds he, calls his miniſters *Stars*, " and he knows beſt in what part of the firmament of " the church to fix them: and (O the delightful " thought!) they can never be out of the reach of his " beams, though they ſhine in different hemiſpheres

" with

" with regard to each other. This leads me, unde-
" ſignedly, to a criticiſm on *Jude* 13, on which per-
" haps an aſtronomer would be the beſt commentator,
" *Wandering ſtars, to whom is reſerved the blackneſs of*
" *darkneſs for ever.* Perhaps an aſtronomical critic
" would obſerve that falſe teachers are repreſented as
" *planetary* or *wandering* ſtars, that in their eccentrici-
" ties run out into an eternal *Aphelion* from the ſun of
" righteouſneſs, beyond the ſyſtem which he warms,
" illuminates, and beatifies, and are conſtantly receding
" from the fountain of light, life, and bliſs, and there-
" fore muſt wander through the blackneſs of darkneſs
" for ever; a darkneſs unpierced by one ray from the
" great ſun and center of the moral world—*blackneſs* of
" *darkneſs*, an abſtract predicated of an abſtract. How
" gloomy and ſtrong the expreſſion!"

Let me give you another quotation from his letters.
" I am very much pleaſed and affected, ſays he, with
" the ſubject of this week's ſtudy, and next Lord's
" day's entertainment, namely, *A bruiſed reed ſhall he*
" *not break, and the ſmoking flax ſhall he not quench.*
" Such a *bruiſed reed* at beſt am I: a weak, oppreſſed,
" uſeleſs thing: a *ſtridens ſtipula* that can make no a-
" greeable melody to entertain my great Shepherd.
" Yet this *bruiſed reed* I have reaſon to hope he will not
" break, but bind up and ſupport. This ſhattered pipe
" of ſtraw he will not caſt away, but repair and tune to
" join in the angelic concert on high. I am at beſt but
" *ſmoking flax*; a dying ſnuff in the candleſtick of his
" church; a wick juſt put out in the lamp of his ſanc-
" tuary. The flame of divine love, ſunk deep into
" the ſocket of a corrupt heart, quivers, and breaks,
" and catches, and ſeems juſt expiring at times. The
" devil and the world raiſe many ſtorms to blow upon
" it. And yet this *ſmoking flax*, where the leaſt ſpark
" of that ſacred paſſion ſtill remains which renders it
" more ſuſceptive of his love, as a candle juſt put out
" but ſtill ſmoking, is eaſily rekindled.—This *ſmoking*
" *flax* he will not quench, but blow it to a flame, which

" ſhall

" ſhall ſhine brighter and brighter till it mingle with " its kindred flames in the pure element of love."

I ſhall conclude my extracts from his epiſtolary correſpondence with a part of a letter, dated *Hanover, September* 12, 1757.

" *My ever dear Friend,*

" I am juſt beginning to creep back from the valley " of the ſhadow of death, to which I made a very near " approach a few days ago. I was ſeized with a moſt " violent fever, which came to a criſis in a week, and " now it is much abated, though I am ſtill confined to " my chamber. In this ſhattered ſtate my trembling " hand can write but little to you, and what I write " will be languid and confuſed, like its author. But " as the *Virginia* fleet is about to ſail, and I know not " when I ſhall have another opportunity, I cannot avoid " writing ſomething. I would ſit down on the grave's " mouth, and talk awhile with my favourite friend; " and from my ſituation you may foreſee what ſubjects " my converſation will turn upon—Death—Eternity " —the ſupreme Tribunal.

" Bleſſed be my Maſter's name, this diſorder found " me employed in his ſervice. It ſeized me in the " pulpit, like a ſoldier wounded in the field. This has " been a buſy ſummer with me. In about two months " I rode about five hundred miles, and preached about " forty Sermons. This affords me ſome pleaſure in " the review. But, alas! the mixture of ſin and of " many nameleſs imperfections that run through and " corrupt all my ſervices, give me ſhame, ſorrow, and " mortification. My fever made unuſual ravages upon " my underſtanding, and rendered me frequently deli- " rious, and always ſtupid. But, when I had any " little ſenſe of things, I generally felt pretty calm and " ſerene, and death, that mighty terror, was diſarmed. " Indeed the thought of leaving my dear family deſti- " tute, and my flock ſhepherdleſs, made me often ſtart " back and cling to life; but in other reſpects death " appeared a kind of indifferency to me. Formerly I

" have

" have wiſhed to live longer that I might be better " prepared for Heaven, but this conſideration had but " very little weight with me, and that for a very unu- " ſual reaſon, which was this—After long trial I found " this world is a place ſo unfriendly to the growth of " every thing Divine and Heavenly, that I was afraid, " if I ſhould live longer, I ſhould be no better fitted " for Heaven than I am. Indeed I have hardly any " hopes of ever making any great attainments in holi- " neſs while in this world, though I ſhould be doom- " ed to ſtay in it as long as *Methuſelah*. I ſee other " chriſtians indeed around me make ſome progreſs, " though they go on with but a ſnail-like motion: but " when I conſider that I ſet out about twelve years old, " and what ſanguine hopes I then had of my future " progreſs, and yet that I have been almoſt at a ſtand " ever ſince, I am quite diſcouraged.—O my good " Maſter, if I may dare to call thee ſo, I am afraid I " ſhall never ſerve thee much better on this ſide the " region of perfection. The thought grieves me: it " breaks my heart, but I can hardly hope better. But " if I have the leaſt ſpark of true piety in my breaſt " I ſhall not always labour under this complaint. No, " my Lord, I ſhall yet ſerve thee—ſerve thee through " an immortal duration—with the activity, the fervor, " the perfection of *the rapt ſeraph that adores and burns.* " I very much ſuſpect this deſponding view of the mat- " ter is wrong, and I do not mention it with approba- " tion, but only relate it as an unuſual reaſon for my " willingneſs to die, which I never felt before, and " which I could not ſuppreſs.

" In my ſickneſs I found the unſpeakable importance " of a Mediator in a religion for ſinners. O! I could " have given you the word of a dying man for it, " that that Jesus whom you preach is indeed a neceſ- " ſary, and an all-ſufficient Saviour. Indeed he is the " only ſupport for a departing ſoul. *None but* Christ, " *none but* Christ. Had I as many good works as " *Abraham* or *Paul*, I would not have dared to build

" my

" my hopes upon ſuch a quickſand, but only on this " firm eternal rock.

" I am riſing up, my brother, with a deſire to re- " commend him better to my fellow-ſinners, than I " have done. But, alas! I hardly hope to accompliſh " it. He has done a great deal more by me already " than I ever expected, and infinitely more than I de- " ſerved. But he never intended me for great things. " He has beings both of my own, and of ſuperior or- " ders, that can perform him more worthy ſervice.— " O! if I might but untie the latchet of his ſhoes, or " draw water for the ſervice of his ſanctuary, it is enough " for me. I am no angel, nor would I murmer be- " cauſe I am not——

" My ſtrength fails me, and I muſt give over— " pray for me—write to me—love me living and dy- " ing, on earth and in heaven."—

Judge you from theſe paſſages, written in the freedom of friendſhip, and to one to whom he ſcrupled not to lay open the ſecrets of his boſom, what a loſs the church has ſuſtained, and how much our world is impoveriſhed by the death of Mr. *Davies*, in the vigour of his days, and in the meridian of his uſefulneſs!

Such a blow, ſuch an uncommon and diſtreſſing blow has been given in the death of Mr. *Davies*. And now what ſhall we do? to what ſhall we recur, or to what quarter ſhall we look for help under ſuch an awful Providence? My advice is, that we ſhould ſeriouſly and attentively turn our minds to the paſſage of ſacred writ which I mentioned at the beginning of my diſcourſe:

Who (that is, God) *works all things after the counſel of his own will.*

Without enquiring into the context, the words may be regarded as a diſtinct propoſition. He (that is, God) works. He works, or he works with energy and irreſiſtible power, in ſuch a manner as none beſides him either has ability or right to work. He works like himſelf, he works with the omnipotence that belongs

to him, and which is his eſſential and diſtinguiſhed attribute*. Farther, not only does GOD work, but he works all things, all things done by him in heaven and earth, in all the provinces of his vaſt empire, all things in Nature, Providence, and Grace, all things in time, and all things in eternity. And he works all things after the counſel of his own will; that is, as he pleaſes. His will is the ſource of his action. He gives an account of his matters to none. None in the army of heaven, or among the inhabitants of the earth, have any authority to ſay unto him, What doſt thou? He depends upon none, but all, all worlds and beings depend upon him; and therefore none are to preſume to dictate to him, or direct him what is or what is not to be done by him. But obſerve, that though he works, and works all things, and all this as he pleaſes, yet it is after the counſel of his own will. We are to conſider GOD indeed as a great ſovereign, as LORD of all, higher than the higheſt, ſupreme and unrivalled in perfection and glory, who is not to be called to the tribunal of his creatures, or to be queſtioned by them, as to what he pleaſes to perform. We are not to ſnatch the ſceptre or the balance from his hands. But yet this we may be aſſured of, that whatever the ALMIGHTY GOD does is done not from a kind of blind though omnipotent neceſſity, neither is it by an unguided or unmeaning exertion of power; but that he works all things after the counſel, the deſign, or wiſdom of his own will.† Survey the great JEHOVAH as he is indeed in

* That the word (Ἐνεργοῦντα) here tranſlated *who works*, contains in it that forcible meaning which I have here aſcribed to it, we may learn from what the critics have ſaid upon it:—"Hac voce ſignificatur actio conjuncta cum efficacia, & quidem ſumma, quæ prohiberi nullo modo poſſit. Iſaiah xli. 4."—LEIGHIUS in verb. "At Græca vox magis ſonat, ejus cujus vi & virtute fiunt omnia, h. e. omnia agentis ac moderantis."—ERASMUS in loc. Could we admit of ſuch an Engliſh word, the original might be rendered who *energizes* all things, &c.

† The word (βουλὴ) he tranſlated *counſel*, may, according to the learned Stephens in his *Theſaurus Græcæ Linguæ*, be rendered

in his own nature, and in the revelation he has made of himſelf to us. If he is ſovereign, and not in the leaſt accountable to any one, yet he is wiſe, and infinitely wiſe.

We are not to view God partially, but as far as we can completely, as the fountain of all perfection; as containing in his nature an harmony of all that is excellent and glorious. He has a right to do, and he can do whatſoever he pleaſes in all his wide-extended dominions; yet what he pleaſes is always worthy of himſelf. He is the aggregate, the ſyſtem of excellence; and one attribute never diſplays itſelf to the diminution or eclipſe of another. As he is greateſt, ſo he is the beſt of beings. Wiſdom dwells eternally and eſſentially in the divine will; and it muſt be obvious, that though none can limit God, yet he, with reverence be it ſpoken, limits himſelf by the rule which infinite wiſdom preſcribes to infinite power. Hear the account ſcripture gives of him—*He is the rock, his works are perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a* God *of truth, and without iniquity, juſt and right is he.* Deut. xxxii. 4. *He is wiſe in heart, as well as mighty in ſtrength.*

a *decree* or *reſolution*, a *counſel* or *advice*, whether good or bad, or a *conſultation* or *deliberation*. If we underſtand the word here of *decree* or *reſolution* as applied to God, we are certain that ſuch a decree or reſolution in Deity had its birth in wiſdom, or in no way derogatory to it. If we interpret the word of *counſel* or *advice*, who ſees not that wiſdom is taken into the account? it is the counſel, it is the advice of the God of unerring wiſdom. But if we take the word, and what forbids that we ſhould not ſo tranſlate it? as denoting conſultation or deliberation, then we are led in the ſtrongeſt manner to conclude that the will of God proceeds upon wiſdom. Not that there is properly or ſtrictly any ſuch thing as conſultation or deliberation in the divine mind: but we may hereby conceive, ſpeaking of God after the manner of men, that God when he wills, wills in ſuch a wiſe manner, and upon ſuch worthy reaſons, as if he had firſt conſulted and deliberated with himſelf what was proper to be done. "Liberé quidem, quia ex voluntate, ſed tamen etiam ſapienter et "juſtè quia ex conſilio voluntatis." ZANCH. "But becauſe (ſays "the great Howe) he orders all things according to the counſel of "his will, we muſt conceive ſome weighty reaſon did induce hereto." —Howe's *Redeemer's Dominion over the Inviſible World*, p. 72. Folio Edition, Vol. II.

ſtrength. Job ix. 4. *His judgments are a great deep.* Pſal. xxxvi. 6,—but they are judgments, the children of wiſdom and counſel ſtill. *If clouds and darkneſs are round about him, yet righteouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* Pſal. xcvii. 2. *His works are truth, and his ways judgment.* Dan. iv. 37. *The* ALMIGHTY *will not pervert judgment.* Job xxxiv. 12. *His ways are equal,* Ezek. xviii. 25, directed by the ſtraight unerring line of infinite wiſdom. Be this then an eſtabliſhed truth with us, that, whatever perplexity and darkneſs may encompaſs the divine proceedings, there is nothing which GOD does, that GOD *who works all things after the counſel of his own will,* but what is juſt, and right, and good; and that his every action is no other than the birth of conſummate counſel, or that the plan of wiſdom is laid as the foundation of all his government. And particularly in ſuch an event as we are now conſidering, the removal of ſuch an excellent and worthy perſon as Mr. *Davies* from our world, in the prime of life, and at ſuch a juncture as this, when there are ſo few ſurviving perſons of ſuch ability and character, we are to believe and own that, as the blow was unqueſtionably given by GOD, it was perfectly right, and that not the leaſt ſhadow or ſuſpicion of blame or wrong is to be aſcribed to the moſt high, moſt holy, moſt wiſe, moſt faithful, and moſt merciful GOD. And even though we could not diſcern ſo much as one reaſon, one end of wiſdom or goodneſs anſwered by ſuch an awful Providence, yet nevertheleſs we are not to doubt but that the All-wiſe as well as the Almighty GOD has proceeded upon motives, though abſolutely impenetrable by us, worthy of himſelf; that he dwells in the thickeſt darkneſs, and that the glories of his perfections are inthroned at the centre, though not a ray of them penetrates and breaks through the external veil. But perhaps, upon a careful and ſteady ſurvey of this moſt afflictive Providence, we may attain to ſome diſcovery of the purpoſes or counſels of Deity in the deceaſe of ſuch an excellent perſon as Mr. *Davies*

in

in the prime of his days, and in the very height of his uſefulneſs. And, though we are not to call the LORD of all to our tribunal, yet perhaps we may not venture beyond our line, or deviate from the path of duty; nay, we may, on the other hand, be glorifying GOD as well as compoſing and comforting ourſelves, if, with profound humility and reverence, we make the enquiry, Wherefore it is that GOD, *who works all things after the counſel of his own will*, is pleaſed to call away by death the excellent of the earth in the vigour of life, and in the meridian of their ſervices for the glory of GOD, and the good of his church? Theſe hard myſteries may not upon a diligent reſearch be altogether inexplicable; and theſe dark paſſages of Providence upon a cloſe ſurvey may apper illuminated with evident and illuſtrious beams of wiſdom and love. Accordingly I ſhall endeavour, I truſt with a decency becoming a poor imperfect creature examining into the ways of the moſt high and glorious GOD, to reſolve this problem of Providence, "Why the excellent of the earth ſhould be taken away in the flower or prime of their age, and from the moſt enlarged ſpheres of uſefulneſs, or what inſtructions and improvements we may gather from ſuch ſeemingly unkind and undeſirable diſpenſations?"

(1.) In the removal of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their uſefulneſs, we may be taught the wonderful Majeſty and independent glories of the great GOD over all bleſſed for evermore. "GOD will have it known, ſays the venerable Mr. *Howe*, on an occaſion not unlike that which has given riſe to our diſcourſe*, that though he uſes inſtruments, he needs them not. It is a piece of divine royalty and magnificence, that when he hath prepared and poliſhed ſuch an utenſil, ſo as to be capable of great ſervice, he can lay it by without loſs."—GOD can maintain and carry on his own cauſe, and

* Howe's Redeemer's Dominion over the Inviſible World, on the death of John Houghton, Eſq.

and anſwer his counſels, without the interpoſition of his creatures, or, if he pleaſes, he may employ only meaner inſtruments, and call home from the vineyard the ableſt and beſt of his ſervants, to ſhew his church he can accompliſh his pleaſure without them.

(2.) GOD may cut off the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their uſefulneſs, to endear and magnify his power and grace in unexpectedly raiſing up others amidſt the deſponding fears and ſorrows of his people. When GOD takes away the excellent of the earth, ſuch as were moſt eminently formed for ſervice, in the midſt of their days, the Church of GOD, the friends of Zion, are apt to ſink into great anxiety and diſtreſs, and to ſay with Zion of old, *The* LORD *has forſaken me, and my* GOD *hath forgotten me*; Iſa. xlix. 14. or with Jacob, *All theſe things are againſt me.* Gen. xlii. 36.—Now at the very juncture when the people of GOD are thus dejected, when their hearts are trembling for the ark of the LORD, for GOD then to ariſe and to make the time of his church's extremity the time of his mercy in raiſing up others, and pouring out his ſpirit upon them in a plentiful effuſion of gifts and graces, how does he hereby moſt wonderfully illuſtrate his power and love! His light, his favour towards Zion appears as it were with a double brightneſs, thus breaking out from amidſt a night of thick darkneſs; and the people of GOD, with a moſt lively and powerful ſenſe of the divine goodneſs, acknowledge that GOD has done great things for them, which they looked not for; and that nothing but his own arm and his own love could have helped them in ſuch a diſtreſſing ſeaſon. Hereby GOD is more eminently ſeen and glorified, and the work appears to be the LORD's, and is wonderful in his people's eyes.

(3.) GOD may take away the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the meridian of their uſefulneſs, to ſhew us more powerfully and affectingly the vanity of the preſent ſtate. GOD

ſhows

ſhows us the vanity of the preſent ſtate when he takes away perſons in old age, when they have reached their threeſcore years and ten, to fourſcore years; for by ſuch inſtances we are taught what a mere hand's breadth of being this life is, even in its utmoſt extent, and how upon our exiſtence in this world will be terminated, even although it is protracted to its fartheſt limit. But when death, uſurping, as it were, by violence the ſickle from the delaying hands of time, cuts off perſons in the bloom or in the prime of life, then is the vanity of the preſent ſtate preached to us in the moſt ſtriking, affecting manner. And if with the bloom of youth or prime of manhood, great intellectual abilities, and ſuperior acquired accompliſhments, diſtinguiſhed piety, and moſt enlarged uſefulneſs are cut off, then, in the moſt ſolemn awful accents, is the vanity of the preſent ſtate proclaimed to us, and our ears receive the leſſon not in ſoft whiſpers, not in a common voice, but in peals of thunder. Then we hear the cry ſounding, as it were, in an overwhelming and irreſiſtible energy, *All fleſh is graſs, and all the goodlineſs thereof is as the flower of the field: the graſs withers, the flower fades, becauſe the ſpirit of the* LORD *blows upon it.* Iſai. xl. 6, 7. —I ſee a man in the vigour and ſtrength of conſtitution, a man ennobled beyond the common multitude by a bright and lively imagination, by a clear and piercing judgment, by a ſuperior, manly, and commanding eloquence: I ſee a man ſuperior to his fellow-chriſtians and his fellow-miniſters, by a moſt ſublime, ſteady, rational, and uniform piety, and by an unextinguiſhable zeal, and unwearied labour for the glory of GOD, and the good of ſouls; this man, thus richly furniſhed and qualified, is taken away by a ſudden ſtroke, or after but a very few days illneſs, and an end is put to all his luſtre and benefit in our world. What inference reſults from all this, but that all is vanity here below? If the beſt we meet with on earth is thus fugitive and uncertain; if it may ſo ſoon be gone, for ever gone from us, then *verily every man at his beſt eſtate*, and the beſt

beſt of men too, are *altogether vanity*. Pſal. x
The pearls and jewels of our world may l
taken from it as the dirt and droſs. There is
there is death in my choiceſt enjoyments.
the tall cedar may be cut down as well as t
plant.—Stars of the firſt magnitude, as v
ſmaller orbs, may quit the ſkies, and vaniſh
ſight. Death makes no diſtinction betwee
bad, between the greateſt and meaneſt, th
worſt. Now he ſtrikes his dart at the poo
and now he launches it at the monarch on l
Now his ſhaft ſmites the chriſtian in his priv
of life, and now his unerring ſtroke lays th
genius, ſcholar, and miniſter in the duſt.—
in this ſenſe, *come alike to all*. Eccl. ix. 2. A
the caſe, do the floods of death alike overv
ſtately and richly freighted ſhip as the ſmall bar
boat, then why ſhould I doat upon the creature?—
I build my fond expectations of peace and comfort upon the beſt of men, I build upon the ſand. My deareſt friendſhips, and richeſt joys on earth may be daſhed in pieces in an hour, in a moment. All on earth is ſhadow, and when I look even to the very beſt it can afford, I ſee the ſame vanity and frailty there, which are common to lower and meaner things.

(4.) God may cut off the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their uſefulneſs, to bring our hearts into a nearer and more intimate dependence upon himſelf. How pleaſed are we apt to be with our enjoyments here below; and eſpecially with our pious friendſhips and connexions? And it may be that we are in ſuch caſes the leſs aware of danger, and the leſs upon our guard as to exceſs, as we are certain that it is no way ſinful, but on the other hand acceptable in the ſight of God, to value the excellent of the earth, and to be delighted with their converſation and company. But even here we may exceed, and by an inordinate regard to only creatures and inſtruments, we may be led aſtray from God;

God; or may not ſo much conſider, adore, and enjoy him in them as we ought. God has a right to our entire hearts; and, unleſs we look to him, and own him in all our beſt enjoyments, we may provoke him to remove them from us; and this he may do, that he may bring us into more intimate union with himſelf, and dependence upon him, that the creature may be ſhewn to be nothing better than a creature, and that he may be honoured and acknowledged as all in all. Peter, upon the mount of transfiguration, ſays, that it *was good for them to be there*, "and was for making three tabernacles, one for his Lord, one for Moſes, and one for Elias; but it is told us he knew not what he ſaid," Luke ix. 33, and the bright viſion was ſoon concluded. God may righteouſly, and indeed graciouſly remove creatures, the beſt creatures from us, if they draw off too much of the current of our affections from himſelf. The ciſtern breaking may endear to us the living fountain. The reed ſinking may recommend us to the rock of ages. God may take away this and the other created excellency that our weakneſs has ſet up a veil between him and our ſouls, that we may lie the more open to his immediate communications, and that we may better remember and practiſe our duty, *to love the* Lord our God *with all* our *heart*, *with all* our *ſoul*, *with all* our *mind*, *and with all* our *ſtrength*. Mark xii. 30.

(5.) As by the death of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, we are taught that no ſtrength of conſtitution, or eminency, or uſefulneſs are ſecurities from death, ſo we may hereby be excited the more diligently to attend to our work, and prepare for our diſmiſſion. If we ſee others taken away younger and ſtronger than ourſelves, then what is the inference, but that we may be cut off as well as they, and indeed more eaſily than they? If we obſerve others more eminent and more ſerviceable than ourſelves called away from life, if their brighter ſplendors and more extenſive benefit to mankind were no protection from

the arreſt of death, then what may we their inferiors expect? We have no exemption from ſickneſs, pain, or ſudden death, or death in the midſt of our days, any more than others. If we had the wiſdom of Solomon, or the zeal and uſefulneſs of St. Paul, ſtill, like them, we ſhould be no better than mortal. Hear then the voice of GOD to you, ſpeaking from the aſhes of the young, the ſtrong, the learned, the eminently pious and uſeful:—*Stand with your loins girded, and your lamps burning. Give diligence, to make your calling and election ſure. Work while it is day; the night comes when no man can work. Whatſoever thine hand finds to do, do it with thy might.* Do not think that becauſe you are a tree, even a palm, or a vine, *whoſe fruit cheers both* GOD *and man*, Judges ix. 13, that therefore the order will not be iſſued out, "Hew down the tree, cut off its branches, and even pluck up its roots." Flatter not yourſelf becauſe you are a ſaint and ſervant of GOD, or a miniſter of ſome conſiderable influence and importance in the church, that death can have no power over you; dream not of an abiding-place here; you dwell in a tabernacle that may be ſoon taken down, even though it is a tabernacle which is holineſs to the LORD. Attend then to your work; every day look out for death, and view yourſelf as at the brink of the grave and at the door of eternity.

(6.) By the death of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the midſt of their ſervices to GOD and his church, we may be led to inquire, whether there is no anger expreſſed againſt us by their ſudden, and in reſpect of the common age of man, untimely removal.

As (1.) We may do well to conſider whether there may not be ſome judgments impending over us. If ambaſſadors are called home, it may become the nation, where they were, to conſider whether a rupture is not likely to enſue. Every good man that is taken away from our world is a loſs to it, a deduction from its worth, in proportion to his goodneſs. There is a

loſs

loſs of his inſtructions, his example, and his prayers. And if the beſt of men are cut off, the loſs grows ſo much the greater, and our apprehenſions of the divine reſentment may very juſtly be ſo much the more awakened. Doves fly home to their windows at the coming ſtorm. *The righteous periſheth, and no man lays it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none conſidering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.* Iſaiah lvii. 1. Lot leaves Sodom; and when he is gone the floodgates of vengeance are ſet open, and the city is turned into deſtruction. Do not let us think lightly of the matter, that we ſee the beſt of men, men that were holy wreſtlers with God, and ſtood in the breach to plead with him to turn away his wrath, removed from our world in the midſt of their days, eſpecially when ſo few ſervants and ſaints of God remained behind, and the world is ſo generally filled with impiety, and all manner of wickedneſs. Good Hezekiah, and after him good Joſiah, muſt go to their graves before the deſtruction comes upon Judah and Jeruſalem.

(2.) And as we know not but the deaths of the excellent of the earth in the midſt of their days, and in the midſt of their uſefulneſs, may portend ſome judgments from God coming upon us, ſo let us hence be excited the more earneſtly to deprecate them, and pray for his merciful regards to us. If the excellent of the earth are taken away, and taken away in the midſt of their uſefulneſs, and if, in ſuch diſpenſations of Providence we may hear, as it were, the firſt alarms of the Almighty anger from his ſecret place of thunder, let us be the more fervent in our ſupplications that he would turn away his anger, and not deal with us after our ſins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. The more gloomy apprehenſion, the more apparent danger, the more ſhould we be excited to prayer, lively and importunate prayer. Let us beg of God, and beg the more earneſtly, that he would have compaſſion upon us, and that the tokens of his judgments may proceed

proceed no farther, and not continue upon us in a ſtorm of reſiſtleſs and overwhelming vengeance. And,

(3.) As we know not but the deaths of the excellent of the earth, in the midſt of their days and uſefulneſs, may be the forerunners of ſome judgments from God at the door, let us prepare to meet our God if he ſhould come out againſt us in the way of his judgments. Do we hear the ſound of his anger, and are there ſome awful flaſhes, though at preſent at a diſtance, that ſeem to ſignify an approaching tempeſt, then let us prepare to meet our God. *Prepare to meet thy* God, *O Iſrael.* Amos iv. 12. Let us gird our chriſtian armour cloſe about us. Let us ſtrengthen ourſelves in our God, and abound in the exerciſes of a dependence upon him, whoſe *grace only is ſufficient for us, and whoſe ſtrength alone can be perfected in our weakneſs.* 2 Cor. xii. 9. Let us be in readineſs to follow our God at his call, either through the waters or fires of affliction, being as willing magnanimouſly to ſuffer for him as we are cheerfully to ſerve him, and not being at all ſhaken in mind or ſpirit by the moſt grievous calamities and trials of life; having an inviolable connexion with and a ſure intereſt in him "who will make all things work together for our good," Rom. viii. 28, and who has promiſed us a better life and a better world, after we have ſuffered a while, *even an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away,* 1 Peter i. 4, and an admiſſion into his palace and preſence, where *there is fulneſs of joy, and a place at his right hand, where are pleaſures for evermore.* Pſal. xvi. 11.

(7.) By the deaths of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the midſt of their uſefulneſs, let us be excited to exert ourſelves more vigorouſly and conſtantly to glorify God, and ſerve our generation, than hitherto we have done. Their removal ſhews us that we may be removed, and ſo quickens us to our duty; and their loſs likewiſe, their loſs to the world, ſhould alſo excite us to duty, ſince though there is as much work as ever, yet there

there are fewer labourers to perform it. The more the world is impoveriſhed, the more let us endeavour to enrich it. If an army is reduced of its number, let the officers, the ſoldiers that remain, not be unwilling to go through double ſervice, and to exert themſelves with a double activity and vigour.

(8.) By the removal of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their uſefulneſs, we are ſure that we have loſt by their departure from our world one tie to earth, and gained one attachment more to heaven. The excellent of the earth are taken away; our friends, our companions with whom we took ſweet counſel. In every ſuch inſtance one or more bond to earth and time is conſequently broken. We are in one more degree detached from the charms of the creature, and hereby may come nearer, if we rightly improve the providence, to a deliverance from this world, that may have had too faſt an hold of our hopes and affections. Had our pious and excellent friends ſtayed behind us, the thought of parting from them, though but for a time, might have thrown a gloom upon our expiring moments, and ſharpened the ſting of death. But they are gone, and life has loſt by the departure of each of them one of its ſtrongeſt engagements. And as we have dropt one tie to earth by their removal, ſo we have gained one more argument for heaven. Heaven lets down one more attractive, and a moſt ſweet and powerful attractive it is, to draw up our hearts and hopes to it; heaven, where our immortal treaſure lies, and whether our pious friends are gone. Let us feel the attachment; and the more heaven enlarges its glorious and bleſſed company of ſaints made perfect, the more let us look by faith within the veil, and the more ready let us be to follow our brethren that have died in CHRIST to the world of glory, that we may ſhare with them in their eternal bleſſedneſs, and in the joys of an intimate, perfect, and indiſſoluble friendſhip.

(9.) And

(9.) And laſtly, Let the removal of the excellent of the earth, in the flower or prime of their days, and in the meridian of their uſefulneſs, quicken us to importunate and inceſſant prayer that GOD would pour out his ſpirit upon ſuch of his ſervants as remain, and upon our riſing miniſtry, and riſing generation. The reſidue of the ſpirit is with GOD, and it is a reſidue copious enough to qualify and conſecrate ſuch as ſurvive, or ſuch as are entering into life, and ſervice, with as eminent gifts and as eminent graces as thoſe who are gone before us. O for the ſpirit of the aſcending Elijahs, to reſt upon our young Eliſhas! *The harveſt truly is great, but the labourers are few*; let as earneſtly and inceſſantly beſeech *the* LORD *of the harveſt that he* would *ſend forth labourers into his harveſt.* Matt. ix. 37, 38. O that GOD would kindle by his Almighty breath, and a rich unction from himſelf, bright and burning lamps, to fill up the places of thoſe which are removed from his ſanctuary below, to ſhine in his temple above! Let the death of ſuch an eminent ſervant of CHRIST as Mr. *Davies*, in the prime of his age, and in the height of his uſefulneſs, excite us to importunate and abundant prayer that GOD would be pleaſed, in compaſſion to our world, to raiſe up like inſtruments of his glory, both in our land and wherever his name is known, or there are any opportunities to preach his goſpel! O for the deſcent of a double portion of the ſpirit upon ſurviving miniſters, and upon all other nurſeries of religion and learning at home and abroad! "Where is the LORD GOD of Elijah?" He lives, he is ſtill with us, though Elijah is gone. To him therefore let us look, to him let us pray with holy importunity and zeal, that the time, even the ſet time to favour his Zion, may come. Let but the LORD "give the word, and pour out of his ſpirit, and great ſhall be the number of thoſe that publiſh it." Pſal. lxviii. 11. "Let him but *clothe his prieſts with ſalvation, and his people ſhall ſhout aloud for joy.*" Pſal. cxxxii. 16.

And

And thus have I endeavoured, from various conſiderations, to reſolve this problem in providence, "Why the excellent of the earth ſhould be taken away in the flower or prime of their age, and from the moſt enlarged ſpheres of uſefulneſs, or what inſtruction and improvement we may gather from ſuch ſeemingly unkind and undeſirable diſpenſations." I pretend not to aſſign all the reaſons of ſuch a conduct in Deity, in that "God, who works all things after the counſel of his own will," but yet poſſibly I may have aſſigned ſome, and ſome ſuch as may convince us that even theſe afflictive, and perhaps frequently ſuppoſed impenetrable proceedings, are not without evident traces of the divine wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and mercy upon them to a duly obſerving eye, ſo that we may not only as the voice of faith, but as the confeſſion of experience ſay, *I know, O* LORD, *that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me.* Pſal. cxix. 75.

I ſhall only add, that whether we can or cannot inveſtigate the motives in the counſels of a holy, wiſe, and merciful GOD, why ſuch providences ſhould take place as the removal of the excellent of the earth in the flower or prime of their days, and in the height of their uſefulneſs; yet two things methinks are indiſpenſible duties upon us in ſuch diſpenſations, Congratulation and Submiſſion. Congratulation that our pious friends are gone to a better world; for as one ſays, "Was not ſelf-love too predominant, and our faith of inviſible realities too weak, we ſhould rejoice at a pious relative (or friend's) admiſſion into the ſociety of the bleſſed. We congratulate them on ſome petty advantage, gained in this low ſtate of being, and we mourn their advancement to the higheſt degree of honour and felicity, becauſe out of our ken!—Such aukward and prepoſterous creatures are we."

The other duty is ſubmiſſion—ſubmiſſion to the high and holy, though awful will of Heaven. Patience has its hour of exertion and effulgence in the darkneſs

neſs of providence, and the ſeaſon of our greateſt trials. "Father, not my will, but thine be done," how glorious, how pleaſant to hear from a ſoul under the preſſures of the ſoreſt afflictions! I have often thought of the noble ſpeech of the Archbiſhop of Cambray, who, when he heard the news of the Duke of Burgundy's death, to whom he had been preceptor, and for whom he had the moſt tender affection, burſt into tears, but yet preſently ſaid, "If I knew that by the turn of a ſtraw I could recover him to life, and yet at the ſame time was aſſured that it was contrary to the will of God, I would not do it."—O for a complacent acquieſcence in the divine diſpoſals! O for the meek and cheerful ſurrender of our wills to the will of our God! May this be our experience till faith is turned into ſight, and hope and patience ſhall be ſwallowed up in boundleſs and everlaſting fruition and joy.

CHARACTER

CHARACTER

OF THE

AUTHOR.

By the Rev. DAVID BOSTWICK, M. A.
OF NEW-YORK.

"IT will doubtleſs be acknowledged on all hands, that a decent reſpect, and a proportionable tribute of honour are due to the memory of thoſe deceaſed, whom the God of Nature and Grace had furniſhed with every valuable endowment, and in his providence had advanced to an extenſive ſphere of uſefulneſs while they lived: and that this was eminently the caſe of my reverend friend and brother, no one, who had the happineſs of his perſonal acquaintance, or could rely on the teſtimony of univerſal fame, will pretend to diſpute.

"I am, however, truly ſenſible that to exhibit a juſt portraiture of Preſident Davies, and draw the lineaments of his amiable character, is a taſk too arduous for me, and would require a genius not inferior to his own; but however, the friendſhip with which he was pleaſed to honour me, the eſteem and veneration I had for him while he lived, with the juſt ſenſe I ſtill entertain of his uncommon worth, unitedly demand the preſent exertion of my feeble attempts, eſpecially as his death has taken place in the intervening time between the preaching of the following Diſcourſe, and its publication, which was committed to my care.

"Mr. Davies was a man of ſuch uncommon furniture, both of gifts and grace, and adorned with ſuch an aſſemblage of amiable and uſeful qualities, and each

ſhining with ſuch diſtinguiſhed luſtre, that it is truly hard to ſay in which he moſt excelled, and equally hard to mention one valuable or uſeful accompliſhment in which he did not excel. A large and capacious underſtanding—a ſolid, unbiaſſed, and well-regulated judgment—a quick apprehenſion—a genius truly penetrating—a fruitful invention—an elegant taſte,—were all happily united in him, and conſtituted a real greatneſs of mind, which never failed to ſtrike every obſerver with an agreeable ſurpriſe.

"To this extraordiary natural capacity were added the improvements of a learned and polite education, which, though in the early years of his ſtudy it was embarraſſed with many peculiar diſadvantages, yet by the ſtrength of his genius, and dint of indefatigable application, was cultivated to ſuch a degree of elegance and refinement, that attracted the notice and admiration of all the friends of ſcience wherever he was known.

"And as the powers of his mind were enriched with every valuable human accompliſhment, ſo they were eminently improved by the influence and efficacy of ſanctifying grace; in conſequence of which they were all ſincerely devoted to the ſervice of God, and the good of mankind. In the early ſtages of his life, it pleaſed a Sovereign God to call him effectually from his natural alienation to the knowledge and love of himſelf, to take a powerful poſſeſſion of his heart, and ſeize all the faculties of his active and capacious ſoul for his ſervice. Upon finiſhing therefore the courſe of his preparatory ſtudies, he entered into the ſacred employment of the goſpel-miniſtry, and ſolemnly dedicated himſelf with all his ſuperior talents to the work of the ſanctuary.

"In the exerciſe of this ſacred office, his fervent zeal and undiſſembled piety, his popular talents and engaging methods of addreſs, ſoon acquired him a diſtinguiſhed character, and general admiration. Scarce was he known as a public preacher but he was ſent, on the earneſt application of the people, to ſome of the

the diſtant ſettlements of Virginia, where many of the inhabitants, in reſpect of religion, were but a ſmall remove from the darkneſs and ignorance of uncultivated heatheniſm, and where the religion of Jeſus, which he endeavoured to propagate, had to encounter with all the blindneſs, prejudice, and enmity, that are natural to the heart of the moſt depraved ſinner. Yet under all apparent diſadvantages, his labours were attended with ſuch remarkable ſucceſs, that all oppoſition quitted the unequal combat, and gave way to the powerful energy of the divine ſpirit, which was graciouſly pleaſed by his miniſtry to add many new ſubjects to the ſpiritual kingdom of our glorious Immanuel.

" The work of the miniſtry was Mr. Davies's great delight; and for it he was admirably furniſhed with every valuable qualification of nature and grace. Divinity was a favourite ſtudy, in which he made a proficiency uncommon for his years, and yet he generally preferred the moſt neceſſary and practical branches of it to the dark mazes of endleſs controverſy and intricate diſputes; aiming chiefly at the converſion of ſinners, and to change the hearts and lives of men by an affecting repreſentation of the plain, but moſt important, intereſting truths of the law and the goſpel. His talent at compoſition, eſpecially for the pulpit, was equalled by few, and perhaps exceeded by none. His taſte was judicious, elegant, and polite, and yet his diſcourſes were plain and pungent, peculiarly adapted to pierce the conſcience and affect the heart. His diction was ſurpaſſingly beautiful and comprehenſive, tending to make the moſt ſtupid hearer ſenſibly feel, as well as clearly underſtand. Sublimity and elegance, plainneſs and perſpicuity, and all the force and energy that the language of mortals could convey, were the ingredients of almoſt every compoſition. His manner of delivery, as to pronunciation, geſture, and modulation of voice, ſeemed to be a perfect model of the moſt moving and ſtriking oratory.

" Whenever he aſcended the ſacred deſk, he ſeemed

to

to have not only the attention, but all the various paſſions of his auditory entirely at his command. And as his perſonal appearance was auguſt and venerable, yet benevolent and mild, ſo he could ſpeak with the moſt commanding authority, or melting tenderneſs, according to the variation of his ſubject. With what majeſty and grandeur, with what energy and ſtriking ſolemnity, with what powerful and almoſt irreſiſtible eloquence would he illuſtrate the truths, and inculcate the duties of chriſtianity! Mount Sinai ſeemed to thunder from his lips, when he denounced the tremendous curſes of the law, and ſounded the dreadful alarm to guilty, ſecure impenitent ſinners. The ſolemn ſcenes of the laſt judgment ſeemed to riſe in view, when he arraigned, tried, and convicted ſelf-deceivers, and formal hypocrites. And how did the balm of Gilead diſtil from his lips, when he exhibited a bleeding dying Saviour to ſinful mortals, as a ſovereign remedy for the wounded heart, and anguiſhed conſcience! In a word, whatever ſubject he undertook, perſuaſive eloquence dwelt upon his tongue; and his audience was all attention. He ſpoke as on the borders of eternity, and as viewing the glories and terrors of an unſeen world, and conveyed the moſt grand and affecting ideas of theſe important realities; realities which he then firmly believed, and which he now ſees in the cleareſt light of intuitive demonſtration.

"The unuſual luſtre with which he ſhone could not long be confined to that remote corner of the world, but ſoon attracted the notice and pleaſing admiration of men of genius, learning, or piety, far and near; and therefore, on a vacancy at the college of New-Jerſey, occaſioned by the deceaſe of two former Preſidents*, in a cloſe and awful ſucceſſion, he was elected to that important office in the year 1759.

"Diſtreſſing as it was both to him and his people, united in the ſtrongeſt bonds of mutual affection, to think

* The Rev. Mr. Aaron Burr, in 1757, and the Rev. Mr. Jonathan Edwards, who ſucceeded him, and died the winter following.

think of a ſeparation, yet a conviction of abſolute duty, reſulting from the importance of the ſtation, from the various concurring providences, and laſtly, from the unanimous advice of his reverend brethren convened in ſynod, determined him to accept the propoſal. Great and pleaſing were the expectations with which we beheld him enter into that exalted ſphere of ſervice; yet I may boldly ſay that they were vaſtly exceeded in every reſpect by the reputable manner in which he diſcharged the arduous truſt. The progreſs he made in all the branches of ſcience, with his capacity and diligence to acquire new improvements, enabled him to conduct the youth with great advantage through the ſeveral ſtages of uſeful and polite literature. And, while he endeavoured to improve the minds, he was not leſs ſolicitous to reform the hearts and lives of his pupils, to make them good as well as great, and fit them for both worlds. He knew that religion was the brighteſt ornament of the human, and the faireſt image of the divine nature, that all true benevolence to men muſt have its foundation laid in a ſupreme love to God, and that undiſſembled piety in the heart was the beſt ſecurity for uſefulneſs in every character of life. It was therefore his conſtant endeavour to promote the eternal as well as the temporal good of the youth intruſted to his tuition, not only by his fervent preaching and exemplary life, but by inculcating at the proper ſeaſons the worth of their ſouls, and the vaſt, the inexpreſſible importance of their everlaſting intereſts.

" In the government of the college, he had the peculiar art of mingling authority and lenity in ſuch a due proportion, as ſeldom or never failed of the deſired ſucceſs. Hence he was revered and loved by every member of that collected family over which he preſided. His performances at public anniverſary commencements, as they never failed to do honour to the inſtitution, ſo they always ſurpriſed his friends themſelves by exceeding, far exceeding their moſt ſanguine ex-

expectations. His poetical compoſitions, and his elegant taſte for cultivating the Muſes, gave additional embelliſhments to thoſe performances, and greatly heightened the pleaſure of his crowded auditors.

"His acquaintance with mankind, his eaſy and polite behaviour, his affability and condeſcenſion, his modeſty and candor, his engaging manner of addreſs, with his ſprightly and entertaining converſation, all the genuine fruits of a moſt benevolent heart, rendered him greatly beloved through the large circle of his acquaintance, and as greatly admired even by ſtrangers, whoſe occaſional excurſions gave them only the opportunity of a tranſient interview.

"His natural temper, amiable in itſelf, and ſweetened with all the charms of divine grace, rendered him peculiarly dear in all the relative characters of ſocial life, whether as an huſband, a father, a tutor, or a friend.

"With this excellent man at the head of the college, what pleaſing proſpects did we form of the extenſive uſefulneſs of that infant ſeminary, both to the church and to the commonwealth! He was, in ſhort, all we could wiſh or deſire in a man, to promote the valuable intereſts of learning and piety, and render the college reputable and uſeful.

"But, alas! all his ample furniture of gifts and graces, all the amiable qualities of the mind, with the advantages of the happieſt conſtitution of body, could not ſecure him from the fate of mortals. He is gone; he has quitted this inferior world amidſt the unfeigned ſorrows of his family, his friends, the college, and our country: he has taken his flight to his native ſkies, and joined with kindred ſpirits in the regions of a glorious immortality, while his remains are gathered to thoſe of his predeceſſors, in the dark and dreary repoſitory of the grave.

"O the unutterable and extenſive loſs to a diſtreſſed family, to a bereaved college, to the miniſtry, to the church, to the community, to the republic of letters, and in ſhort to all the valuable intereſts of mankind!"

SERMON

SERMON I.

The divine Authority and Sufficiency of the Chriſtian Religion.

LUKE xvi. 27—31. *Then he ſaid, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldeſt ſend him to my father's houſe, for I have five brethren, that he may teſtify unto them, leſt they alſo come into this place of torment. Abraham ſaith unto him, They have Moſes and the prophets; let them hear them. And he ſaid, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.*

WHAT Micah ſaid ſuperſtitiouſly, when he was robbed of his idols, *ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?* (Judg. xviii. 24.) may be truly ſpoken with regard to the religion of Jeſus, If that be taken from us, what have we more? *If the foundations be deſtroyed, what ſhall the righteous do?* Pſal. xi. 3. The generality of you owe all your hopes of a glorious immortality to this heaven-born religion, and you make it the rule of your faith and practice; confident that in ſo doing you pleaſe God.

But what if after all you ſhould be miſtaken? what if the religion of Jeſus ſhould be an impoſture?—I know you are ſtruck with horror at the thought, and perhaps alarmed at my making ſo ſhocking a ſuppoſition. But this ſuſpicion, horrid as it is, has probably been ſuggeſted to you at times by infernal agency; this ſuſpicion may at times have riſen in your minds in their wanton and licentious excurſions, or from the falſe alarms of a melancholy and timorous imagination;

tion: and if this ſuſpicion has never been raiſed in you by the ſophiſtical converſation of looſe wits and affected rationaliſts, it has been owing to your happy retirement from the polite world, where infidelity makes extenſive conqueſts, under the ſpecious name of Deiſm. Since therefore you are ſubject to an aſſault from ſuch a ſuſpicion, when you may not be armed ready to repel it, let me this day ſtart it from its ambuſh, that I may try the force of a few arguments upon it, and furniſh you with weapons to conquer it.

Let me alſo tell you, that *that* faith in the chriſtian religion which proceeds from inſufficient or bad principles, is but little better than infidelity. If you believe the chriſtian religion to be divine, becauſe you hardly care whether it be true or falſe, being utterly unconcerned about religion in any ſhape, and therefore never examining the matter;—If you believe it true, becauſe you have been educated in it; becauſe your parents or miniſters have told you ſo; or becauſe it is the religion of your country; if theſe are the only grounds of your faith, it is not ſuch a faith as conſtitutes you true chriſtians; for upon the very ſame grounds you would have been Mahometans in Turkey, diſciples of Confucius in China, or worſhippers of the devil among the Indians, if it had been your unhappy lot to be born in thoſe countries: for a Mahometan, or a Chineſe, or an Indian, can aſſign theſe grounds for his faith. Surely, I need not tell you, that the grounds of a miſtaken belief in an impoſture, are not a ſufficient foundation for a ſaving faith in a divine revelation. I am afraid there are many ſuch implicit believers among us, who are in the right only by chance: and theſe lie a prey to every temptation, and may be turned out of the way of truth by every wind of doctrine. It is therefore neceſſary to teach them the grounds of the chriſtian religion, both to prevent their ſeduction, and to give them a rational and well-grounded faith, inſtead of that which is only blind and accidental.

Nay,

Nay, ſuch of us as have the cleareſt conviction of this important truth, had need to have it inculcated upon us, that we may be more and more impreſſed with it; for the influence of chriſtianity upon our hearts and lives will be proportioned to the realizing, affecting perſuaſion of its truth and certainty in our underſtandings.

If I can prove that chriſtianity anſwers all the ends of a religion from God;—if I can prove that it is attended with ſufficient atteſtations;—if I can prove that no ſufficient objections can be offered againſt it;—and that men have no reaſon at all to deſire another; but that if this proves ineffectual for their reformation and ſalvation, there is no ground to hope that any other would prove ſucceſsful:—I ſay, if I can prove theſe things, then the point in debate is carried, and we muſt all embrace the religion of Jeſus as certainly true.—Theſe things are aſſerted or implied in my text, with reſpect to the ſcriptures then extant, *Moſes and the prophets.*

My text is a parabolical dialogue between *Abraham* and one of his wretched poſterity, once rioting in the luxuries of high life, but now tormented in infernal flames.

We read of his brethren in his father's houſe. Among theſe probably his eſtate was divided upon his deceaſe; from whence we may infer that he had no children; for had he had any, it would have been more natural to repreſent him as ſolicitous for their reformation by a meſſenger from the dead, than for that of his brothers. He ſeems therefore, like ſome of our unhappy modern rakes, juſt to have come to his eſtate, and to have abandoned himſelf to ſuch a courſe of debaucheries as ſoon ſhattered his conſtitution, and brought him down to the grave, and alas! to hell, in the bloom of life, when they were far from his thoughts. May this be a warning to all of his age and circumſtances!

Whether, from ſome remaining affection to his brethren, or (which is more likely) from a fear that they who had ſhared with him in ſin would increaſe his torment, ſhould they deſcend to him in the infernal priſon, he is ſolicitous that Lazarus might be ſent as an apoſtle from the dead to warn them. His petition is to this purpoſe: "Since no requeſt in my own favour can be granted; ſince I cannot obtain the poor favour of a drop of water to cool my flaming tongue, let me at leaſt make one requeſt in behalf of thoſe that are as yet in the land of hope, and not beyond the reach of mercy. In my father's houſe I have five brethren, gay, thoughtleſs, young creatures, who are now rioting in thoſe riches I was forced to leave, who interred my mouldering corpſe in ſtate, little apprehenſive of the doom of my immortal part; who are now treading the ſame enchanting paths of pleaſure I walked in; and will, unleſs reclaimed, ſoon deſcend, like me, thoughtleſs and unprepared, into theſe doleful regions: I therefore pray, that thou wouldeſt ſend Lazarus to alarm them in their wild career, with an account of my dreadful doom, and inform them of the reality and importance of everlaſting happineſs and miſery, that they may reform, and ſo avoid this place of torment, whence I can never eſcape."

Abraham's anſwer may be thus paraphraſed: "If thy brothers periſh, it will not be for want of means; they enjoy the ſacred ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, written by *Moſes and the prophets*; and theſe are ſufficient to inform them of neceſſary truths to regulate their practice, and particularly to warn them of everlaſting puniſhment! Let them therefore hear and regard, ſtudy and obey, thoſe writings; for they need no further means for their ſalvation.

To this the wretched creature replies, "Nay, father Abraham, theſe means will not avail; I enjoyed them all; and yet here I am, a loſt ſoul; and I am afraid they will have as little effect upon them as they had upon me. Theſe means are common and familiar,

liar, and therefore diſregarded. But if one aroſe from the dead; if an apoſtle from the inviſible world was ſent to them, to declare as an eye-witneſs the great things he has ſeen, ſurely they would repent. The novelty and terror of the apparition would alarm them. Their ſenſes would be ſtruck with ſo unuſual a meſſenger, and they would be convinced of the reality of eternal things; therefore I muſt renew my requeſt; ſend Lazarus to them in all the pomp of heavenly ſplendor; Lazarus whom they once knew in ſo abject a condition, and whom they will therefore the more regard, when they ſee him appear in all his preſent glory."

Thus the miſerable creature pleads (and it is natural for us to wiſh for other means, when thoſe we have enjoyed are ineffectual, though it ſhould be through our own neglect); but, alas! he pleads in vain.

Abraham continues inexorable, and gives a very good reaſon for his denial: "If they pay no regard to the writings of *Moſes and the prophets*, the ſtanding revelation God has left in his church, it would be to no purpoſe to give them another: they would not be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead; the ſame diſpoſition that renders them deaf to ſuch meſſengers as *Moſes and the prophets*, would alſo render them imperſuaſible by a meſſenger from the dead. Such a one might ſtrike them with a panic, but it would ſoon be over, and then they would return to their uſual round of pleaſures; they would preſently think the apparition was but the creature of their own imagination, or ſome unaccountable illuſion of their ſenſes. If one aroſe from the dead, he could but declare the ſame things ſubſtantially with *Moſes and the prophets*; and he could not ſpeak with greater authority, or give better credentials than they; and therefore they who are not benefited by theſe ſtanding means, muſt be given up as deſperate; and God, for very good reaſons, will not multiply new revelations to them."

This

This anſwer of Abraham was exemplified when another Lazarus was raiſed from the dead in the very ſight of the Jews, and Chriſt burſt the bands of death, and gave them inconteſtible evidences of his reſurrection; and yet after all they were not perſuaded, but perſiſted in invincible infidelity.

This parable was ſpoken before any part of the New Teſtament was written, and added to the ſacred canon; and if it might be then aſſerted, that the ſtanding revelation of God's will was ſufficient, and that it was needleſs to demand farther, then much more may it be aſſerted now, when the canon of the ſcriptures is completed, and we have received ſo much additional light from the New Teſtament. We have not only *Moſes and the prophets*, but we have alſo Chriſt, who is a meſſenger from the dead, and his apoſtles; and therefore, ſurely "if we do not hear them, neither would we be perſuaded, though one aroſe from the dead." The goſpel is the laſt effort of the grace of God with a guilty world; and if this has no effect upon us, our diſeaſe is incurable that refuſes to be healed.

I cannot inſiſt upon all the important truths contained in this copious text, but only deſign,

I. To ſhew the ſufficiency of the ſtanding revelation of God's will in the ſcriptures, to bring men to repentance: and,

II. To expoſe the vanity and unreaſonableneſs of the objections againſt this revelation, and of demanding another.

I. I am to ſhew the ſufficiency of the ſtanding revelation in the ſcriptures to bring men to repentance.

If the ſcriptures give us ſufficient inſtructions in matters of faith, and ſufficient directions in matters of practice,—if they are attended with ſufficient evidences for our faith,—and produce ſufficient excitements to influence our practice, then they contain a ſufficient revelation; for it is for theſe purpoſes we need a revelation, and a revelation that anſwers theſe purpoſes has

has the directeſt tendency to make us truly religious, and bring us to an happy immortality. But that the revelation in the ſcriptures (particularly in the New Teſtament, which I ſhall more immediately conſider as being the immediate foundation of Chriſtianity) is ſufficient for all theſe purpoſes, will be evident from an induction of particulars.

1. The ſcriptures give us ſufficient inſtructions what we ſhould believe, or are a ſufficient rule of faith.

Religion cannot ſubſiſt without right notions of God and divine things; and entire ignorance or miſtakes in its fundamental articles, muſt be deſtructive of its nature; and therefore a divine revelation muſt be a collection of rays of light, a ſyſtem of divine knowledge;—and ſuch we find the chriſtian revelation to be, as contained in the ſacred writings.

In the ſcriptures we find the faint diſcoveries of natural reaſon illuſtrated, its uncertain conjectures determined, and its miſtakes corrected; ſo that chriſtianity includes natural religion in the greateſt perfection. But it does not reſt here; it brings to light things which *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither the heart of man conceived*, 1 Corinth. ii. 9,—things, which our feeble reaſon could never have diſcovered without the help of a ſupernatural revelation; and which yet are of the utmoſt importance for us to know.

In the ſcriptures we have the cleareſt and moſt majeſtic account of the nature and perfections of the Deity, and of his being the Creator, Ruler, and Benefactor of the univerſe; to whom therefore all reaſonable beings are under infinite obligations.

In the ſcriptures we have an account of the preſent ſtate of human nature, as degenerate, and a more rational and eaſy account of the manner of its apoſtaſy, than could ever be given by the light of nature.

In the ſcriptures too (which wound but to cure) we have the welcome account of a method of recovery from the ruins of our apoſtaſy, through the mediation of the Son of God; there we have the aſſurance which

which we could find no where elſe, that God is reconcilable, and willing to pardon penitents upon the account of the obedience and ſufferings of Chriſt. There all our anxious enquiries, *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord?* or *bow myſelf before the moſt high God? ſhall I come before him with burnt-offerings?* &c. Micah vi. 6, 7, are ſatisfactorily anſwered; and there the agonizing conſcience can obtain relief, which might have ſought it in vain among all the other religions in the world.

In the ſcriptures alſo, eternity and the inviſible worlds are laid open to our view; and "life and immortality are brought to light by the goſpel;" about which the heathen ſages, after all their enquiries, laboured under uneaſy ſuſpicions. There we are aſſured of the ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments, according to our conduct in this ſtate of probation; and the nature, perfection, and duration of the happineſs and miſery, are deſcribed with as much accuracy as are neceſſary to engage us to ſeek the one and ſhun the other.

I particularize theſe doctrines of Chriſtianity as a ſpecimen, or as ſo many general heads, to which many others may be reduced; not intending a complete enumeration, which would lead me far beyond the bounds of one ſermon; and for which my whole life is not ſufficient. I therefore proceed to add,

2. The holy ſcriptures give us complete directions in matters of practice, or are a ſufficient rule of life.

A divine revelation muſt not be calculated merely to amuſe us, and gratify our curioſity with ſublime and refined notions and ſpeculations, but adapted to direct and regulate our practice, and render us better as well as wiſer.

Accordingly, the ſacred writings give us a complete ſyſtem of practical religion and morality. There, not only all the duties of natural religion are inculcated, but ſeveral important duties; as love to our enemies, humility, *&c.* are clearly diſcovered; which the feeble light

light of reaſon in the heathen moraliſts did either not perceive at all, or but very faintly. In ſhort, there we are informed of our duties towards God, towards our neighbours, and towards ourſelves. The ſcriptures are full of particular injunctions and directions to particular duties, leſt we ſhould not be ſagacious enough to infer them from general rules; and ſometimes all theſe duties are ſummed up in ſome ſhort maxim, or general rule; which we may eaſily remember, and always carry about with us. Such a noble ſummary is that which Chriſt has given us of the whole moral law; "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. and thy neighbour as thyſelf." Or that all-comprehending rule of our conduct towards one another, "Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye the ſame unto them."

What recommends theſe doctrinal inſtructions and practical directions is, that they are plain and obvious to common ſenſe. It is as much the concern of the illiterate and vulgar to be religious, as of the few endowed with an exalted and philoſophic genius; and conſequently, whatever difficulties may be in a revelation to exerciſe the latter, yet all neceſſary matters of faith and practice muſt be delivered in a plain manner, level to the capacities of the former; otherwiſe it would be no revelation at all to them who ſtand in moſt need of it. Accordingly the religion of Jeſus, though it has myſteries equal and infinitely ſuperior to the largeſt capacity, yet in its neceſſary articles is intelligible to all ranks who apply themſelves with proper diligence to the peruſal of them: and I dare affirm, that a man of common ſenſe, with the aſſiſtance of the ſacred ſcriptures, can form a better ſyſtem of religion and morality than the wiſeſt philoſopher, with all his abilities and learning, can form without this help. This I dare affirm, becauſe it has been put to trial, and atteſted by matter of fact; for whoever is acquainted with the writings of the ancient heathen philoſophers, cannot but be convinced, that, amidſt all their learning

learning and ſtudy, amidſt all their ſhining thoughts and refined ſpeculations, they had not ſuch juſt notions of God and his perfections, of the moſt acceptable way of worſhipping him, of the duties of morality, and of a future ſtate, as any common chriſtian among us has learned from the ſcriptures, without any uncommon natural parts, without extenſive learning, and without ſuch painful ſtudy and cloſe application as the heathen moraliſts were forced to uſe to make their leſs perfect diſcoveries. In this ſenſe the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven, *i. e.* any common chriſtian, is greater than all the Socrateſes, the Platos, the Ciceros, and the Senecas of antiquity; as one that is of a weak ſight can ſee more clearly by the help of day-light, than the cleareſt eye can without it.

And by whom was this vaſt treaſury of knowledge laid up to enrich the world? by whom were theſe matchleſs writings compoſed, which furniſh us with a ſyſtem of religion and morality ſo much more plain, ſo much more perfect, than all the famous ſages of antiquity could frame? Why, to our aſtoniſhment, they were compoſed by a company of fiſhermen, or perſons not much ſuperior; by perſons generally without any liberal education; perſons who had not devoted their lives to intellectual improvement; perſons of no extraordinary natural parts, and who had not travelled, like the ancient philoſophers, to gather up fragments of knowledge in different countries, but who lived in Judea, a country where learning was but little cultivated, in compariſon of Greece and Rome. Theſe were the moſt accompliſhed teachers of mankind that ever appeared in the world. And can this be accounted for, without acknowledging their inſpiration from heaven? If human reaſon could have made ſuch diſcoveries, ſurely it would have made them by thoſe in whom it was improved to the greateſt perfection, and not by a company of ignorant mechanics.

The perſons themſelves declare that they had not made theſe diſcoveries, but were taught them immediately

diately from heaven (which indeed we muſt have believed, though they had not told us ſo).—Now we muſt believe their declaration, and own them inſpired, or fall into this abſurdity, That a company of illiterate, wicked, and daring impoſtors, who were hardy enough to pretend themſelves commiſſioned and inſpired from God, have furniſhed us with an incomparably more excellent ſyſtem of religion and virtue, than could be furniſhed by all the wiſeſt and beſt of the ſons of men beſide; and he that can believe this may believe any thing; and ſhould never more pretend that he cannot believe the chriſtian religion upon the account of the difficulties that attend it.

I have touched but ſuperficially upon the ſufficiency of the ſcriptures as a rule of faith and practice; for to dwell long upon this would be to fight without an antagoniſt. Our infidels reject the chriſtian religion, becauſe they ſuppoſe it requires them to believe and practiſe too much, rather than too little. Hence they are for lopping off a great part of its doctrine and precepts, as ſuperfluities, or incumbrances, and forming a meagre ſkeleton of natural religion. Their intellectual pride will not ſtoop to believe doctrines which they cannot comprehend; and they cannot bear ſuch narrow bounds as the precepts of chriſtianity fixes for them in their purſuits of pleaſure, and therefore they would break theſe bands aſunder. That which they affect moſt to complain of, is the want of evidence to convince them of the truth of this ungrateful religion; it will therefore be neceſſary to prove more largely, that,

3. The ſcriptures are attended with ſufficient evidences of their truth and divinity.

It is certain, that as God can accept no other worſhip than rational from reaſonable creatures, he cannot require us to believe a revelation to be divine without ſufficient reaſon; and therefore, when he gives us a revelation, he will atteſt it with ſuch evidences as will be a ſufficient foundation of our belief.

Accordingly, the ſcriptures are atteſted with all the evidences, intrinſic and extrinſic, which we can reaſonably deſire, and with all the evidences the nature of the thing will admit.

As for intrinſic evidences, many might be mentioned; but I muſt at preſent confine myſelf in proper limits. I ſhall reſume the one I have already hinted at, namely, that the religion of the Bible has the directeſt tendency to promote true piety and ſolid virtue in the world; it is ſuch a religion as becomes a God to reveal; ſuch a religion as we might expect from him, in caſe he inſtituted any; a religion intended and adapted to regulate ſelf-love, and, to diffuſe the love of God and man through the world, the only generous principles and vigorous ſprings of a ſuitable conduct towards God, towards one another, and towards ourſelves; a religion productive of every humane, ſocial, and divine virtue, and directly calculated to baniſh all ſin out of the world; to transform impiety into devotion; injuſtice and oppreſſion into equity and univerſal benevolence; and ſenſuality into ſobriety: a religion infinitely preferable to any that has been contrived by the wiſeſt and beſt of mortals. And whence do ye think could this godlike religion proceed? does not its nature prove its origin divine? does it not evidently bear the lineaments of its heavenly parent? can you once imagine that ſuch a pure, ſuch a holy, ſuch a perfect ſyſtem, could be the contrivance of wicked infernal ſpirits, of ſelfiſh, artful prieſts, or politicians, or of a parcel of daring impoſtors, or wild enthuſiaſts? Could theſe contrive a religion ſo contrary to their inclination, ſo deſtructive of their intereſt, and ſo directly conducing to promote the cauſe they abhor? If you can believe this, you may alſo believe that light is the product of darkneſs, virtue of vice, good of evil, *&c.*—If ſuch beings as theſe had contrived a religion, it would have borne the ſame appearance in the Bible as it does in Italy or Spain, where it is degenerated into a mere trade, for the benefit of tyrannical

tyrannical and voracious prieſts; or it would have been ſuch a religion as that of Mahomet, allowing its ſubjects to propagate it with the ſword, that they might enrich themſelves with the plunder of conquered nations; and indulging them in the gratification of their luſts, particularly in polygamy, or the unbounded enjoyment of women. This religion, I fear, would ſuit the taſte of our licentious free-thinkers much better than the holy religion of Jeſus. Or if we ſhould ſuppoſe chriſtianity to be the contrivance of viſionary enthuſiaſts, then it would not be that rational ſyſtem which it is, but a huddle of fanatical reveries and ridiculous whims. If, then, it could not be the contrivance of ſuch authors as theſe, to whom ſhall we aſcribe it? it muſt have had ſome author; for it could not come into being without a cauſe, no more than the ſyſtem of the univerſe. Will you then aſcribe it to good men? But theſe men were either inſpired from heaven, or they were not; if they were not, then they could not be good men, but moſt audacious liars; for they plainly declared, they were divinely inſpired, and ſtood in it to the laſt; which no good man would do, if ſuch a declaration was falſe. If they were inſpired from heaven, then the point is gained; then chriſtianity is a religion from God; for to receive a religion from perſons divinely inſpired, and to receive it from God, is the ſame thing.

Another intrinſic evidence is that of prophecy.

Thoſe future events which are contingent, or which ſhall be accompliſhed by cauſes that do not now exiſt or appear, cannot be certainly foreknown or foretold by man, as we find by our own experience. Such objects fall within the compaſs of omniſcience only; and therefore when ſhort-ſighted mortals are enabled to predict ſuch events many years, and even ages before they happen, it is a certain evidence that they are let into the ſecrets of heaven, and that God communicates to them a knowledge which cannot be acquired by the moſt ſagacious human mind; and this is an evidence

that

that the perſons thus divinely taught are the meſſengers of God, to declare his will to the world.

Now there are numberleſs inſtances of ſuch prophecies in the ſacred writings. Thus a prophet foretold the deſtruction of Jeroboam's altar by the good Joſiah, many ages before. 1 *Kings* xiii. 2. Cyrus was foretold by name as the reſtorer of the Jews from Babylon, to re-build their temple and city, about an hundred years before he was born. *Iſaiah* xlv. 1, &c.—Several of the prophets foretold the deſtruction of various kingdoms in a very punctual manner, as of Jeruſalem, Babylon, Egypt, Nineveh, &c. which prediction was exactly fulfilled. But the moſt remarkable prophecies of the Old Teſtament are thoſe relating to the Meſſiah; which are ſo numerous and full, that they might ſerve for materials of his hiſtory; they fix the time of his coming, *viz.* while the ſceptre continued in Judah, *Gen.* xlix. 10, while the ſecond temple was yet ſtanding, *Hag.* ii. 7, *Mal.* iii. 2, and towards the cloſe of Daniel's ſeventy weeks of years, *i. e.* four hundred and ninety years from the re-building of Jeruſalem. *Dan.* ix. 24, *&c.*—Theſe prophecies alſo deſcribe the lineage of the Meſſiah, the manner of his conception, his life and miracles, his death, and the various circumſtances of it; his burial, reſurrection, aſcenſion, and advancement to univerſal empire, and the ſpread of the goſpel through the world. In the New Teſtament alſo we meet with ſundry remarkable prophecies. There Chriſt foretels his own death, and the manner of it, and his triumphant reſurrection; there, with ſurpriſing accuracy, he predicts the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by the Romans. We find various prophecies alſo in the apoſtolic epiſtles, particularly that of St. Paul, *Rom.* xi. concerning the converſion of the Jews; which, though it be not yet accompliſhed, yet we ſee a remarkable providence making way for it, in keeping the Jews, who are ſcattered over all the earth, diſtinct from all other nations for about one thouſand ſeven hundred years, though they are hated

of

of all nations, and conſequently under the ſtrongeſt temptation to coaleſce with, and loſe themſelves among them; and though all other nations have in a much ſhorter time mixed in ſuch a manner, that none of them can now trace their own original; *e. g.* Who can now diſtinguiſh the poſterity of the ancient Romans from the Goths and Vandals, and others that broke in upon their empire and ſettled among them; or of the ancient Angli from the Danes, &c. that mingled with them?

Theſe and many other plain predictions are interſperſed through the ſcriptures, and prove their original to be from the Father of lights, who alone knows all his works from the beginning, and who declares ſuch diſtant contingent futurities from ancient times. *Iſaiah* xlv. 21.

I might, as another intrinſic evidence of the truth of chriſtianity, mention its glorious energy on the minds of men, in convincing them of ſin, eaſing their conſciences, inſpiring them with unſpeakable joy, ſubduing their luſts, and transforming them into its own likeneſs; which is atteſted by the daily experience of every true Chriſtian. Every one that believeth hath this witneſs in himſelf: and this is an evidence level to the meaneſt capacity, which may be ſoon loſt in a courſe of ſublime reaſoning. But as the Deiſts declare, alas! with too much truth, that the goſpel hath no ſuch power upon them, it is not to my purpoſe to inſiſt upon it. I therefore proceed to mention ſome of

The *extrinſic* evidences of the religion of Jeſus, particularly the miracles with which it was confirmed, and its early propagation through the world.

Miracles in this caſe are events above or contrary to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, done with a profeſſed deſign to atteſt a revelation; and as they are obvious and ſtriking to the ſenſes of the moſt ignorant and unthinking, they are the moſt popular and convictive evidences, adapted to the capacities of the generality of mankind, who are incapable of a long train of argumentation,

gumentation, or of perceiving the origin of a religion from its nature and tendency.

Now the religion of Jeſus is abundantly atteſted with this kind of evidence. The hiſtory of the life of Jeſus, and his apoſtles, is one continued ſeries of miracles. Sight was reſtored to the blind, the deaf were enabled to hear, the lame to walk, the maimed furniſhed with new-created limbs, the ſick healed, the rage of winds and ſeas controled, yea, the dead were raiſed; and all this with an air of ſovereignty, ſuch as became a God; the apoſtles were alſo endowed with miraculous powers, enabled to ſpeak with tongues, and communicate the Holy Spirit to others. Theſe miracles were done not in a corner, but in the moſt public places, before numerous ſpectators, friends and foes; and the perſons that wrought them appealed to them as the evidences of their divine miſſion; and the account of them is conveyed down to us by the beſt medium, written tradition, in a hiſtory that bears all the evidences of credibility, of which any compoſure of that kind is capable.

Another extrinſic evidence of the truth of chriſtianity is its extenſive propagation through the world in the moſt unpromiſing circumſtances.

The only religion, beſides the Chriſtian, which has had any very conſiderable ſpread in the world, is that of Mahomet; but we may eaſily account for this, without ſuppoſing it divine, from its nature, as indulging the luſts of men; and eſpecially from the manner of its propagation, not by the force of evidence, but by the force of arms. But the circumſtances of the propagation of chriſtianity were quite otherwiſe, whether we conſider its contrariety to the corruptions, prejudices, and intereſts of men;—the eaſineſs of detecting it, had it been falſe;—the violent oppoſition it met with from all the powers of the earth;—the inſtruments of its propagation;—or the meaſures they took for that purpoſe.

Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity was directly contrary to the corruptions, prejudices, and intereſts of mankind. It grants no indulgence to the corrupt propenſions of a degenerate world: but requires that univerſal holineſs of heart and life which, as we find by daily obſervation, is ſo ungrateful to them; and which is the principal reaſon that the religion of Jeſus meets with ſo much contempt and oppoſition in every age.

When chriſtianity was firſt propagated, all nations had been educated in ſome other religion; the Jews were attached to Moſes, and the Gentiles to their various ſyſtems of heatheniſm; and were all of them very zealous for their own religion: but chriſtianity propoſed a new ſcheme, and could not take place without antiquating or exploding all other religions; and therefore it was contrary to the inveterate prejudices of all mankind; and could never have been ſo generally received, if it had not brought with it the moſt evident credentials; eſpecially conſidering that ſome of its doctrines were ſuch as ſeemed to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; particularly that one of obſcure birth and low life, who was publicly executed as a ſlave and malefactor, ſhould be worſhipped and honoured as God, upon pain of everlaſting damnation! that there ſhould be a reſurrection of the dead: the laſt of which was an object of ridicule to all the wits and philoſophers of the heathen world. —Again, as ſome religion or other was eſtabliſhed in all nations, there were many, like Demetrius and his craftſmen, whoſe temporal livings and intereſt depended upon the continuance of their religion; and if that was changed, they fell into poverty and diſgrace. There was a powerful party in every nation, and they would exert themſelves to prevent the ſpread of an innovation ſo dangerous to their intereſt, which we find by all hiſtories of thoſe times they actually did. And yet the deſpiſed religion of Jeſus triumphed over all their oppoſition, and maintained its credit in ſpite of all their endeavours

endeavours to detect it as an impoſture; and this proves it was not an impoſture; for,

In the next place, it was eaſy to have detected chriſtianity as an impoſture, nay, it was impoſſible it ſhould not have been detected, if it had been ſuch; for the great facts upon which the evidence of it reſted, were ſaid to be obvious and public, done before thouſands, and in all countries; for wherever the apoſtles travelled, they carried their miraculous powers along with them. Thouſands muſt know whether Chriſt had fed many thouſands with proviſions only ſufficient for a few; whether Lazarus was raiſed from the dead before the admiring multitude; whether the apoſtles ſpoke with tongues to thoſe various nations among whom they endeavoured to propagate their religion (as indeed they muſt have done, otherwiſe they would not have been underſtood.) Theſe things, and many others, upon which the evidence of chriſtianity depends, were public in their own nature; and therefore, if they had not been matters of fact, the cheat muſt have been unavoidably detected, eſpecially when ſo many were concerned to detect it.

Farther: chriſtianity met with the moſt ſtrenuous oppoſition from all the powers of the earth. The Jewiſh rulers and moſt of the populace were implacable enemies; and as they lived on the ſpot where its miraculous atteſtations were ſaid to be given, it was in their power to cruſh it in its birth, and never have ſuffered it to ſpread farther, had it not been attended with invincible evidence. All the power of the Roman empire was alſo exerted for its extirpation; and its propagators and diſciples could expect no profit or pleaſure by it, but were aſſured from the poſture of affairs, from daily experience, and from the predictions of their maſter, that they ſhould meet with ſhame, perſecution, and death itſelf in its moſt tremendous ſhapes; and in the next world they could expect nothing, even according to their own doctrine, but everlaſting damnation, if they were wilful impoſtors:

tors: and yet, in ſpite of all theſe diſcouragements, they courageouſly perſiſted in their teſtimony to the laſt, though they might have ſecured their lives, and helped their fortunes (as Judas did) by retracting it; nay, their teſtimony prevailed in defiance of all oppoſition; multitudes in all nations then known embraced the faith; though they expected tortures and death for it; and in a few centuries, the vaſt and mighty Roman empire ſubmitted to the religion of a crucified Jeſus. And who were thoſe mighty heroes that thus triumphed over the world? Why, to our ſurprize,

The inſtruments of the propagation of Chriſtianity were a company of poor mechanics, publicans, tent-makers, and fiſhermen, from the deſpiſed nation of the Jews! And by what ſtrange powers or arts did they make theſe extenſive conqueſts?

The meaſures they took were a plain declaration of their religion; and they wrought miracles for its confirmation. They did not uſe the power of the ſword, no ſecular terrors, or bribery; they were without learning, without the arts of reaſoning and perſuaſion; and without all the uſual artifice of ſeducers to gain credit to their impoſture.

Here I cannot but take particular notice of that matchleſs ſimplicity that appears in the hiſtory of Chriſt and his apoſtles. The evangeliſts write in that artleſs, calm, and unguarded manner, which is natural to perſons confident of the undeniable truth of what they aſſert; they do not write with that ſcrupulous caution which would argue any fear that they might be confuted. They ſimply relate the naked facts, and leave them to ſtand upon their own evidence. They relate the moſt amazing, the moſt moving things, with the moſt cool ſerenity, without any paſſionate exclamations and warm reflections. For example, they relate the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles, as the reſurrection of Lazarus, in the moſt ſimple, and, as it were, careleſs manner, without breaking out and celebrating the divine power of Chriſt. In the ſame

manner they relate the moſt tragical circumſtances of his condemnation and death, calmly mentioning matter of fact, without any invectives againſt the Jews, without any high eulogies upon Chriſt's innocence, without any rapturous celebrations of his grace in ſuffering all theſe things for ſinners, and without any tender lamentations over their deceaſed maſter. It is impoſſible for a heart ſo deeply impreſſed with ſuch things, as theirs undoubtedly were, to retain this diſpaſſionate ſerenity, unleſs laid under ſupernatural reſtraints; and there appears very good reaſons for this reſtraint upon them, *viz.* that the goſpel-hiſtory might carry intrinſic evidences of its ſimplicity and artleſs impartiality; and that it might appear adapted to convince the judgments of men, and not merely to raiſe their paſſions. In this reſpect, the goſpel-hiſtory is diſtinguiſhed from all hiſtories in the world: and can we think ſo plain, ſo undiſguiſed, ſo artleſs a compoſure, the contrivance of deſigning impoſtors?—Would not a conſciouſneſs that they might be detected keep them more upon their guard, and make them more ready to anticipate and confine objections, and take every artifice to recommend their cauſe, and prepoſſeſs the reader in its favour?

It only remains under this head, that I ſhould

(4.) Shew that the religion of Jeſus propoſes ſufficient excitements to influence our faith and practice.

To enforce a ſyſtem of doctrines and precepts, two things are eſpecially neceſſary,—that they ſhould be made duty by competent authority,—and matters of intereſt by a ſanction of rewards and puniſhments. To which I may add, that the excitements are ſtill ſtronger, when we are laid under the gentle obligations of gratitude. In all theſe reſpects the chriſtian religion has the moſt powerful enforcements.

The authority upon which we are required to receive the doctrines, and obſerve the precepts of chriſtianity, is no leſs than the authority of God, the ſupreme Lawgiver and infallible Teacher; whoſe wiſ-

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dom to preſcribe and right to command, are indiſputable; and we may ſafely ſubmit our underſtandings to his inſtructions, however myſterious, and our wills to his injunctions, however difficult they may ſeem to us. This gives the religion of Jeſus a binding authority upon the conſciences of men; which is abſolutely neceſſary to bring piety and virtue into practice in the world; for if men are left at liberty, they will follow their own inclinations, however wicked and pernicious. And in this reſpect chriſtianity bears a glorious preference to all the ſyſtems of morality compoſed by the heathen philoſophers; for though there were many good things in them, yet who gave authority to Socrates, Plato, or Seneca, to aſſume the province of lawgivers and dictators to mankind, and preſcribe to their conſciences?—All they could do was to teach, to adviſe, to perſuade, to reaſon: but mankind were at liberty, after all, whether to take their advice or not. And this ſhews the neceſſity of ſupernatural revelation, not merely to make known things beyond human apprehenſion, but to enforce with proper authority ſuch duties as might be diſcovered by man; ſince without it they would not have the binding force of a law.

As to the ſanction of rewards and puniſhments in chriſtianity, they are ſuch as became a God to annex to his majeſtic law, ſuch as are agreeable to creatures formed for immortality, and ſuch as would have the moſt effectual tendency to encourage obedience, and prevent ſin; they are no leſs than the moſt perfect happineſs and miſery which human nature is capable of, and that through an endleſs duration. If theſe are not ſufficient to allure rational creatures to obedience, then no conſiderations that can be propoſed can have any effect. Theſe tend to alarm our hopes and our fears, the moſt vigorous ſprings of human activity; and if theſe have no effect upon us, nothing that God can reveal, or our minds conceive, will have any effect. God, by adding the greateſt ſanctions poſſible to his law, has taken the beſt poſſible precautions

to

to prevent diſobedience; and ſince even theſe do not, reſtrain men from it, we are ſure that leſs would not ſuffice.—If men will go on in ſin, though they believe the puniſhment due to it will be eternal, then much more would they perſiſt in it, if it were not eternal; or, if they ſay they will indulge themſelves in ſin; becauſe they believe it not eternal, then this proves from their own mouth, that it ſhould be eternal in order to reſtrain them. The prevalence of ſin in the world tends to render it miſerable; and therefore, to prevent it, as well as to diſplay God's eternal regard to moral goodneſs, it is fit that he ſhould annex the higheſt degree of puniſhment to diſobedience in every individual; for the indulgence of ſin in one individual would be a temptation to the whole rational creation; and, on the other hand, the threatenings of everlaſting puniſhment to all ſinners indefinitely, is neceſſary to deter the whole rational world, and every particular perſon from diſobedience. Thus in civil government, it is neceſſary that robbery ſhould be threatened indefinitely with death, becauſe, though one robber may take from a man but what he can very well ſpare; yet, if every man might rob and plunder his neighbour, the conſequence would be univerſal robbery and confuſion. It is therefore neceſſary that the greateſt puniſhment ſhould be threatened to diſobedience, both to prevent it and to teſtify the divine diſpleaſure againſt it; which is the primary deſign of the threatening; and ſince the penalty was annexed with this view, it follows, that it was primarily enacted with a view to the happineſs of mankind, by preventing what would naturally make them miſerable, and but ſecondarily with a view to be executed; for it is to be executed only upon condition of diſobedience; which diſobedience it was intended to prevent, and conſequently it was not immediately intended to be executed, or enacted for the ſake of the execution, as though God took a malignant pleaſure in the miſery of his creatures, But when the penalty has failed of its primary end,

end, reſtraining from ſin, then it is fit it ſhould anſwer its ſecondary end, and be executed upon the offender, to keep the reſt of reaſonable creatures in their obedience, to illuſtrate the veracity and holineſs of the lawgiver, and prevent his government from falling into contempt. There are the ſame reaſons that threatenings ſhould be executed when denounced, as for their being denounced at firſt; for threatenings never executed, are the ſame with no threatenings at all.

Let me add, that the goſpel lays us under the ſtrongeſt obligations from gratitude. It not only clearly informs us of our obligations to God, as the author of our being and all our temporal bleſſings, which natural religion more faintly diſcovers, but ſuperadds thoſe more endearing ones derived from the ſcheme of man's redemption through the death of the eternal Son of God. Though the bleſſings of creation and Providence are great in themſelves, they are ſwallowed up, as it were, and loſt in the love of God; which is commended to us by this matchleſs circumſtance, "that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us;" and while under the conſtraints of this love, we cannot but devote ourſelves entirely to God, 2 *Corinth*, v. 14, 15.

Thus I have hinted at a few things among the many that might be mentioned to prove the divinity of the religion of Jeſus, and its ſufficiency to bring men to repentance and ſalvation. And if it be ſo, why ſhould it be rejected, or another ſought?—This reminds me that I promiſed,

II. To expoſe the vanity and unreaſonableneſs of the objections againſt the Chriſtian Religion, or of demanding another, *&c.*

What can our ingenious infidels offer againſt what has been ſaid? It muſt be ſomething very weighty indeed to preponderate all this evidence. A laugh, or a ſneer, a pert witticiſm, declaiming againſt prieſtcraft and the prejudices of education, artful evaſions, and ſhallow ſophiſms, the uſual arguments of our pretended free-thinkers, theſe will not ſuffice to banter

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us out of our joyful confidence of the divinity of the religion of Jeſus; and I may add, theſe will not ſuffice to indemnify them. Nothing will be ſufficient for this but demonſtration: it lies upon them to prove the chriſtian religion to be certainly falſe; otherwiſe, unleſs they are hardened to a prodigy, they muſt be racked with anxious fears leſt they ſhould find it true at leaſt to their coſt; and leſt that diſmal threatening ſhould ſtand firm againſt them:—"*He that believeth not, ſhall be damned.*" What mighty objections, then, have they to offer? Will they ſay that the chriſtian religion contains myſterious doctrines, which they cannot comprehend, which ſeem to them unaccountable? As that of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Satisfaction of Chriſt, *&c.* But will they advance their underſtanding to be the univerſal ſtandard of truth? Will they pretend to comprehend the infinite God in their finite minds? then let them go, and meaſure the heavens with a ſpan, and comprehend the ocean in the hollow of their hand. Will they pretend to underſtand the divine nature, when they cannot underſtand their own? when they cannot account for or explain the union betwixt their own ſouls and bodies? Will they reject myſteries in chriſtianity, when they muſt own them in every thing elſe? Let them firſt ſolve all the phænomena in nature; let them give us a rational theory of the infinite diviſibility of a piece of finite matter; let them account for the ſeemingly magical operation of the loadſtone; the circulation of the blood upwards as well as downwards, contrary to all the laws of motion; let them inform us of the cauſes of the coheſion of the particles of matter; let them tell us, how ſpirits can receive ideas from material organs; how they hear and ſee, *&c.* let them give us intelligible theories of theſe things, and then they may, with ſomething of a better grace, ſet up for critics upon God and his ways; but, while they are myſteries to themſelves, while every particle of matter baffles their underſtandings, it is the moſt impious

pious intellectual pride to reject chriſtianity upon the account of its myſteries, and to ſet up themſelves as the ſupreme judges of truth.

Or will they object that there are a great many difficult and ſtrange paſſages in ſcripture, the meaning and propriety of which they do not ſee? And are there not many ſtrange things in the book of nature, and the adminiſtration of Providence, the deſign and uſe of which they cannot ſee, many things that to them ſeem wrong and ill-contrived? Yet they own the world was created by God, and that his providence rules it: and why will they not allow that the ſcriptures may be from God, notwithſtanding theſe difficulties and ſeeming incongruities? When a learned man can eaſily raiſe his diſcourſe above the capacity of common people, will they not condeſcend to grant that an infinite God can eaſily overſhoot their little ſouls? Indeed a revelation which we could fully comprehend, would not appear the production of an infinite mind; it would bear no reſemblance to its Heavenly Father; and therefore we ſhould have reaſon to ſuſpect it ſpurious. It is neceſſary we ſhould meet with difficulties in the ſcriptures to mortify our pride. But farther, will they make no allowance for the different cuſtoms and practices of different ages? It is certain, that may be proper and graceful in one age which would be ridiculous and abſurd in another; and ſince the ſcriptures were written ſo many years ago, we may ſafely make this allowance for them, which will remove many ſeeming abſurdities. There ſhould alſo allowance be made for the ſcriptures being rendered literally out of dead difficult languages; for we know that many expreſſions may be beautiful and ſignificant in one language, which would be ridiculous and nonſenſical if literally tranſlated into another. Were Homer or Virgil thus tranſlated into Engliſh, without regard to the idiom of the language, inſtead of admiring their beauties, we ſhould be apt to think (as Cowley expreſſes it) "that one madman had tranſlated another madman."

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Will they object the wicked lives of its profeſſors againſt the holineſs and good tendency of chriſtianity itſelf? But is it chriſtianity, as practiſed in the world, or chriſtianity as taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and continued in the Bible, that I am proving to be divine? You know it is the latter, and conſequently the poor appearance it makes in the former ſenſe, is no argument againſt its purity and divinity in this. Again, are the bad lives of profeſſors taught and enjoined by genuine chriſtianity, and agreeable to it? No; they are quite contrary to it, and ſubverſive of it; and it is ſo far from encouraging ſuch profeſſors, that it pronounces them miſerable hypocrites; and their doom will be more ſevere than that of heathens. Again, are there not hypocritical profeſſors of morality and natural religion, as well as of revealed? Are there not many who cry up morality and religion of nature, and yet boldly violate its plaineſt precepts? If therefore this be a ſufficient objection againſt chriſtianity, it muſt be ſo too againſt all religion. Further: do men grow better by renouncing the religion of Jeſus? Obſervation aſſures us quite the contrary. Finally, are there not ſome of the profeſſors of chriſtianity, who live habitually according to it? who give us the beſt patterns of piety and virtue that ever were exhibited to the world? This is ſufficient to vindicate the religion they profeſs, and it is highly injurious to involve ſuch promiſcuouſly in the odium and contempt due to barefaced hypocrites. How would this reaſoning pleaſe the Deiſts themſelves in parallel caſes? "Some that have no regard to chriſtianity have been murderers, thieves, &c. therefore all that diſregard it are ſuch." Or "ſome that pretended to be honeſt, have been found villains; therefore all that pretend to it are ſuch; or therefore honeſty is no virtue."

Or will they change the note, and inſtead of pleading that chriſtianity leads to licentiouſneſs, object that it bears too hard upon the pleaſures of mankind, and lays them under too ſevere reſtraints? Or that its penalties

penalties are exceſſive and cruel? But does it rob mankind of any pleaſures worthy the rational nature, worthy the purſuit of creatures formed for immortality, and conſiſtent with the good of the whole? It reſtrains them indeed; but it is only as a phyſician reſtrains his patient from poiſon or an improper regimen; it reſtrains men from living like beaſts; it reſtrains them from thoſe pleaſures which will ruin their ſouls and bodies in the event; it reſtrains them from gratifying a private paſſion at the expence of the public; in ſhort, it reſtrains them from making themſelves and others miſerable. Hard reſtraints indeed! and the Deiſts, to be ſure, are generous patrons of human liberty, who would free us from ſuch grievances as theſe! However, this objection lets us into the ſecret, and informs us of the reaſon why our pretended free-thinkers are ſuch enemies to chriſtianity; it is becauſe it checks their luſts, and will not permit them to act, as well as to think freely, *i. e.* as they pleaſe. If they would content themſelves with manly and rational pleaſures, they would not count the reſtraints of chriſtianity intolerable; nay, they would find in it a ſet of peculiarly noble and refined pleaſures, which they might ſeek in vain elſewhere; for it is ſo far from being an enemy to the happineſs of man, that it was deſigned to promote it; and then we make ourſelves miſerable when we reject it, or it becomes our intereſt that it ſhould be falſe. As to the penalty of everlaſting puniſhment annexed to ſin, which is but a temporal evil, I would aſk them whether they are competent judges in a matter in which they are parties? Are they capable to determine what degree of puniſhment ſhould be inflicted upon diſobedience to the infinite Majeſty of heaven, when they are not only ſhort-ſighted creatures, but alſo concerned in the affair, and their judgments may be perverted by ſelf-intereſt? Whether is it moſt fit that the Judge of all the earth ſhould determine this point, or a company of malefactors, as they are? Is it allowed to criminals in

civil courts to determine their own doom, and pronounce their own ſentence? If it were, few of them would be puniſhed at all, and government would fall into contempt. Again, let me remind them, that the penalty was annexed to prevent diſobedience, and ſo to render the execution needleſs; and conſequently it was primarily intended for their good. Why then will they fruſtrate this deſign, and, when they have rendered the execution neceſſary, complain of its ſeverity? If they think the penalty ſo terrible, let them watch againſt ſin, let them accept the ſalvation the goſpel offers, and ſo avoid it inſtead of quarrelling with its ſeverity, and yet ruſhing upon it. Or, if they ſay they will perſiſt in ſin becauſe they do not believe the puniſhment is eternal; this gives me room to appeal to themſelves whether a leſs penalty than everlaſting miſery would be ſufficient to reſtrain them from ſin; and whether God would have taken all proper precautions to prevent ſin, if he had annexed a leſs puniſhment to his law, ſince, by their own confeſſion, nothing leſs could deter them from it. I ſhall only add, that as the human ſoul muſt always exiſt, and as by indulgence in ſin in the preſent ſtate it contracts ſuch habits as render it incapable of happineſs in the holy enjoyment of the heavenly world, it muſt by a natural neceſſity be for ever miſerable, though God ſhould not exert any poſitive act for its puniſhment. And if the Deiſts ſay, that puniſhment for ſome time would reclaim offenders from ſin, and bring them to repentance, the difficulty is not removed, unleſs they can prove that miſery will bring men to love that God who inflicts it, which they can never do;—and it is evident, that *that* repentance which proceeds merely from ſelf-love, without any regard to God at all, can never be pleaſing to him, nor prepare them for happineſs in the enjoyment of him. Puniſhment would produce a repentance like that of a ſick-bed, forced, ſervile, and tranſitory.

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Will they object, that miracles are not a ſufficient evidence of the truth and divinity of a revelation, becauſe infernal ſpirits may alſo work miracles, as in the caſe of the magicians of Egypt, to confirm an impoſture? But it is known that our free-thinkers explode and laugh at the exiſtence and power of evil ſpirits in other caſes, and therefore muſt not be allowed to admit them here to ſerve a turn. However, we grant there are infernal ſpirits, and that they can perform many things above human power, which may appear to us miraculous, and yet the evidence in favour of chriſtianity taken from miracles ſtands unſhaken; for (1) Can we ſuppoſe that theſe malignant and wicked ſpirits, whoſe buſineſs it is to ſeduce men to ſin and ruin, would be willing to exert their power to work miracles to confirm ſo holy a religion, a religion ſo contrary to their deſign, and ſo ſubverſive of their kingdom and intereſt? This would be wretched policy indeed. Or if we ſhould ſuppoſe them willing, yet, (2) Can we think that God, who has them all at his control, would ſuffer them to counterfeit the great ſeal of heaven, and annex it to an impoſture? that is, to work ſuch miracles as could not be diſtinguiſhed from thoſe wrought by him to atteſt an impoſture? Would he permit them to impoſe upon mankind in a manner that could not be detected? This would be to deliver the world to their management, and ſuffer them to lead them blindfold to hell in unavoidable deluſion: for miracles are ſuch dazzling and pompous evidences, that the general run of mankind could not reſiſt them, even though they were wrought to atteſt a religion that might be demonſtrated by a long train of ſublime reaſoning to be falſe. God may indeed ſuffer the devil to mimic the miracles wrought by his immediate hand, as in the caſe of Jannes and Jambres; but then, as in that caſe too, he will take care to excel them, and give ſome diſtinguiſhing marks of his almighty agency, which all mankind may eaſily diſcriminate from the utmoſt exertion of infernal power.

power. But though Satan ſhould be willing, and God ſhould permit him to work miracles, yet, (3) Can we ſuppoſe that all the united powers of hell united, are able to work ſuch aſtoniſhing miracles as were wrought for the confirmation of the chriſtian religion? Can we ſuppoſe that they can control the laws of nature at pleaſure, and that with an air of ſovereignty, and profeſſing themſelves the lords of the univerſe, as we know Chriſt did? If we can believe this, then we deify them, and may as well aſcribe the creation and preſervation of the world to them. If they could exert a creating power to form new limbs for the maimed, or to multiply five loaves and two fiſhes into a ſufficient quantity of food for five thouſand, and leave a greater quantity of fragments when that were done than the whole proviſion at firſt, then they might create the world, and ſupport all the creatures in it. If they could animate the dead and remand the ſeparate ſoul back to its former habitation, and reunite it with the body, then I ſee not why they might not have given us life at firſt. But to ſuppoſe this, would be to dethrone the King of Heaven, and renounce his providence entirely. We therefore reſt aſſured that the miracles related in the ſcriptures were wrought by the finger of God.

But our free-thinkers will urge, How do we at this diſtance know that ſuch miracles were actually wrought? they are only related in ſcripture-hiſtory; but to prove the truth of ſcripture from arguments that ſuppoſe the ſcripture true, is a ridiculous method of reaſoning, and only a begging of the queſtion. But (1) the reality of thoſe miracles was granted by the enemies of chriſtianity in their writings againſt it; and they had no anſwer to make, but this ſorry one, that they were wrought by the power of magic. They never durſt deny that they were wrought; for they knew all the world could prove it. Indeed, an honourable teſtimony concerning them could not be expected from infidels; for it would be utterly inconſiſtent that they ſhould

ſhould own theſe miracles ſufficient atteſtations of chriſtianity, and yet continue infidels. And this may anſwer an unreaſonable demand of the Deiſts, that we ſhould produce ſome honourable teſtimony concerning theſe atteſtations from Jews and Heathens, as well as from Chriſtians, who were parties. We ſhould have much more reaſon to ſuſpect the teſtimony of the former as not convictive when it did not convince the perſons themſelves. But,

(2.) As theſe miracles were of ſo public a nature, and as ſo many were concerned to detect them, that they would unavoidably have been detected when related in words if they had not been done; ſo, for the ſame reaſons, they could not but have been detected when related in writing; and this we know they never were. If theſe miracles had not been matters of undoubted fact, they could not have been inſerted at firſt in the goſpel-hiſtory; for then many thouſands in various countries were alive to confute them; and they could not have been intruded into it afterwards, for all the world would ſee that it was then too late, and that if there had been ſuch things, they ſhould have heard of them before: for they were much more neceſſary for the firſt propagation of chriſtianity than for its ſupport when received.

But it may be objected, How can we at this diſtance know that theſe hiſtories are genuine? May they not have been corrupted, and many additions made to them by deſigning men in ages ſince? And why is it not alſo aſked, how do we know that there were ſuch men as Alexander, Julius Cæſar, or King William the Third? How do we know but their hiſtories are all romance and fable? How do we know that there were any generations of mankind before ourſelves? How do we know but all the acts of parliament of former reigns are corrupted, and we are ruled by impoſitions? In ſhort, How can we know any thing, but what we have ſeen with our eyes? We may as well make difficulties of all theſe things, and ſo de-

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ſtroy all human teſtimony, as ſcruple the genuineneſs of the ſacred writings; for never were any writings conveyed down with ſo good evidence of their being genuine and uncorrupted as theſe. Upon their firſt publication they were put into all hands, they were ſcattered into all nations, tranſlated into various languages, and all peruſed them; either to be taught by them, or to cavil at them. And ever ſince, they have been quoted by thouſands of authors, appealed to by all parties of chriſtians, as the ſupreme judge of controverſies; and not only the enemies of chriſtianity have carefully watched them to detect any alterations which pious fraud might attempt to make, but one ſect of chriſtians has kept a watchful eye over the other, leſt they ſhould alter any thing in favour of their own cauſe. And it is matter of aſtoniſhment as well as conviction, that all the various copies and tranſlations of the ſcriptures in different nations and libraries are ſubſtantially the ſame, and differ only in matters of ſmall moment; ſo that from the worſt copy or tranſlation in the world, one might eaſily learn the ſubſtance of chriſtianity.

Or will our infidels inſiſt to be eye-witneſſes of theſe facts? Muſt one ariſe from the dead, or new miracles be wrought to convince them by occular demonſtration? This is a moſt unreaſonable demand, for (1) The continuance of miracles in every age would be attended with numerous inconveniences. For example, Multitudes muſt be born blind, deaf, or dumb; multitudes muſt be afflicted with incurable diſeaſes, and poſſeſſed by evil ſpirits; multitudes muſt be diſturbed in the ſleep of death; and all the laws of nature muſt be made precarious and fickle, in order to leave room for miraculous operations; and all this to humour a company of obſtinate infidels, who would not believe upon leſs ſtriking though entirely ſufficient evidence. (2.) The continuance of miracles from age to age would deſtroy their very nature, to which it is eſſential, that they be rare and extraordinary; for what

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is ordinary and frequent, we are apt to aſcribe to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, however wonderful it be in itſelf. For example, if we ſaw dead bodies riſe from their graves, as often as we ſee vegetables ſpring from ſeed rotten in the earth, we ſhould be no more ſurpriſed at the one phænomenon than we are at the other, and our *virtuoſi* would be equally buſy to aſſign ſome natural cauſe for both.

And had we never ſeen the ſun riſe until this morning, we ſhould juſtly have accounted it as great a miracle as any recorded in the ſcriptures; but becauſe it is common, we neglect it as a thing of courſe. Indeed, it is not any thing in the event itſelf, or in the degree of power neceſſary for its accompliſhment, that renders it miraculous, but its being uncommon, and out of the ordinary courſe of things; for example, the generation of the human body is not in itſelf leſs aſtoniſhing, nor does it require leſs power, than its reſurrection: the revolution of the ſun in its regular courſe, is as wonderful, and as much requires a divine power, as its ſtanding ſtill in the days of Joſhua. But we acknowledge a miracle in the one caſe, but not in the other, becauſe the one is extraordinary, while the other frequently occurs. Hence it follows, that the frequent repetition of miracles, as often as men are pleaſed to plead the want of evidence to excuſe their infidelity, would deſtroy their very nature; and conſequently, to demand their continuance is to demand an impoſſibility. But (3) Suppoſe that men ſhould be indulged in this requeſt, it would not probably bring them to believe. If they are unbelievers now, it is not for want of evidence, but through wilful blindneſs and obſtinacy; and as they that will ſhut their eyes can ſee no more in meridian light than in the twilight, ſo they that reject a ſufficiency of evidence would alſo reſiſt a ſuperfluity of it. Thus the Jews, who were eye-witneſſes of the miracles recorded in the ſcriptures, continued invincible infidels ſtill. They had always ſome trifling caval ready to object againſt the

the brighteſt evidence. And thus our modern infidels would no doubt evade the force of the moſt miraculous atteſtation by ſome wretched hypotheſis or other: they would look upon miracles either as magical productions, or illuſions of their ſenſes; or rather, as natural and neceſſary events, which they would indeed have ſome reaſon to conclude, if they were frequently performed before their eyes. Some have pretended to doubt of the exiſtence and perfections of God, notwithſtanding the evidences thereof upon this magnificent ſtructure of the univerſe; and muſt God be always creating new worlds before theſe obſtinate creatures for their conviction? Such perſons have as much reaſon to demand it in this caſe, as our Deiſts have to inſiſt for new miracles in the other. I might add, that ſuch glaring evidence, as, like the light of the ſun, would force itſelf irreſiſtibly upon the minds of the moſt reluctant, would not leave room for us to ſhow our regard to God in believing, for we ſhould then believe from extrinſic neceſſity, and not from choice. It is therefore moſt correſpondent to our preſent ſtate of probation, that there ſhould be ſomething in the evidence of a divine revelation to try us; ſomething that might fully convince the teachable, and yet not remove all umbrages for cavilling from the obſtinate.

Thus I have anſwered as many objections as the bounds of a ſermon would admit; and I think they are the principal ones which lie againſt my ſubject in the view I have conſidered it. And as I have not deſignedly ſelected the weakeſt, in order to an eaſy triumph, you may look upon the anſwers that have been given as a ground of rational preſumption, that all other objections may be anſwered with equal eaſe. Indeed, if they could not, it would not invalidate the poſitive arguments in favour of chriſtianity; for when we have ſufficient poſitive evidence for a thing, we do not reject it, becauſe it is attended with ſome difficulties which we cannot ſolve.

My

My time will allow me to make but two or three ſhort reflections upon the whole.

1. If the religion of Jeſus be atteſted with ſuch full evidence, and be ſufficient to conduct men to everlaſting felicity, then how helpleſs are they that have enjoyed it all their life without profit; who either reject it as falſe, or have not felt its power to reform their hearts and lives? It is the laſt remedy provided for a guilty world; and if this fails, their diſeaſe is incurable, and they are not to expect better means.

2. If the religion of Jeſus be true, then wo unto the wicked of all ſorts; wo to infidels both practical and ſpeculative, for all the curſes of it are in full force againſt them, and I need not tell you how dreadful they are.

3. If the religion of Jeſus be true, then I congratulate ſuch of you, whoſe hearts and lives are habitually conformed to it, and who have ventured your everlaſting All upon it. You build upon a ſure foundation, and your hope ſhall never make you aſhamed.

Finally, Let us all ſtrive to become rational and practical believers of this heaven-born religion. Let our underſtandings be more rationally and thoroughly convinced of its truth; and our hearts and lives be more and more conformed to its purity; and ere long we ſhall receive thoſe glorious rewards it enſures to all its ſincere diſciples; which may God grant to us all for Jeſus' ſake. Amen!

SERMON II.

The Method of Salvation through Jeſus Chriſt.

JOHN iii. 16. *For God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

I HAVE been ſolicitouſly thinking in what way my life, redeemed from the grave, may be of moſt

ſervice to my dear people. And I would collect all the feeble remains of my ſtrength into one vigorous effort this day to promote this benevolent end. If I knew what ſubject has the moſt direct tendency to ſave your ſouls, that is the ſubject to which my heart would cling with peculiar endearment, and which I would make the matter of the preſent diſcourſe.

And when I conſider I am ſpeaking to an aſſembly of ſinners, guilty, depraved, helpleſs creatures, and that, if ever you be ſaved, it will be only through Jeſus Chriſt, in that way which the goſpel reveals; when I conſider that your everlaſting life and happineſs turn upon this hinge, namely, the reception you give to this Saviour, and this way of ſalvation; I ſay, when I conſider theſe things, I can think of no ſubject I can more properly chooſe than, to recommend the Lord Jeſus to your acceptance, and to explain and inculcate the method of ſalvation through his mediation; or, in other words, to preach the pure goſpel to you; for the goſpel, in the moſt proper ſenſe, is nothing elſe but a revelation of a way of ſalvation for ſinners of Adam's race.

My text furniſhes me with proper materials for my purpoſe. Let heaven and earth hear it with wonder, joy, and raptures of praiſe! *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever* or that every one that *believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

This is a part of the moſt important evening converſation that ever was held; I mean, that between Chriſt and Nicodemus, a Phariſee and ruler of the Jews. Our Lord firſt inſtructs him in the doctrine of regeneration, that grand conſtituent of a chriſtian, and pre-requiſite to our admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven; and then he proceeds to inform him of the goſpel-method of ſalvation, which contains theſe two grand articles, the death of Chriſt, as the great foundation of bleſſedneſs; and faith in him, as the great qualification upon the part of the ſinner.—He preſents

preſents this important doctrine to us in various forms, with a very ſignificant repetition. *As Moſes lifted up the ſerpent in the wilderneſs, even ſo ſhall the Son of man be lifted up*; that is, hung on high on a croſs, *that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* Then follows my text, which expreſſes the ſame doctrine with great force:—*God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, gave him up to death, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* He goes on to mention a wonder. This earth is a rebellious province of Jehovah's dominions, and therefore if his Son ſhould ever viſit it, one would think it would be as an angry judge, or as the executioner of his Father's vengeance. But, O aſtoniſhing! *God ſent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be ſaved.* Hence the terms of life and death are thus fixed, *He that believeth in him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* Sure the heavenly rivers of pleaſure flow in theſe verſes! Never, methinks, was there ſo much goſpel expreſſed in ſo few words! Here take the goſpel in miniature, and bind it to your hearts for ever. Theſe verſes alone, methinks, are a ſufficient remedy for a dying world.

The truths I would infer from the text for preſent improvement are theſe:—that without Chriſt you are all in a periſhing condition;—that through Jeſus Chriſt a way is opened for your ſalvation;—that the grand pre-requiſite to your being ſaved in this way, is faith in Jeſus Chriſt;—that every one, without exception, whatever his former character has been, that is enabled to comply with this pre-requiſite, ſhall certainly be ſaved;—and that the conſtitution of this method of ſalvation, or the miſſion of Chriſt into our world, as the Saviour of ſinners, is a moſt ſtriking and aſtoniſhing inſtance and diſplay of the love of God.

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I. My text implies, that without Chriſt you are all in a periſhing condition. This holds true of you in particular, becauſe it holds true of the world univerſally: for the world was undoubtedly in a periſhing condition without Chriſt, and none but he could relieve it, otherwiſe God would never have given his only begotten Son to ſave it. God is not oſtentatious or prodigal of his gifts, eſpecially of ſo ineſtimable a gift as his Son, whom he loves infinitely more than the whole creation. So great, ſo dear a perſon would not have been ſent upon a miſſion which could have been diſcharged by any other being. Thouſands of rams muſt bleed in ſacrifice, or ten thouſands of rivers of oil muſt flow; our firſt-born muſt die for our tranſgreſſions, and the fruit of our body for the ſin of our ſouls; or Gabriel, or ſome of the upper ranks of angels, muſt leave their thrones, and hang upon a croſs, if ſuch methods of ſalvation had been ſufficient. All this would have been nothing in compariſon of the only begotten Son of God leaving his native heaven, and all its glories, aſſuming our degraded nature, ſpending thirty-three long and tedious years in poverty, diſgrace, and perſecution, dying as a malefactor and a ſlave in the midſt of ignominy and torture, and lying a mangled breathleſs corpſe in the grave. We may be ſure there was the higheſt degree of neceſſity for it, otherwiſe God would not have given up his dear Son to ſuch an horrid ſcene of ſufferings.

This, then, was the true ſtate of the world, and conſequently yours without Chriſt; it was hopeleſs and deſperate in every view. In that ſituation there would not have been ſo much goodneſs in the world as to try the efficacy of ſacrifices, prayers, tears, reformation, and repentance, or they would have been tried in vain. It would have been inconſiſtent with the honour of the divine perfections and government, to admit ſacrifices, prayers, tears, repentance, and reformation, as a ſufficient atonement.

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What a melancholy view of the world have we now before us! We know the ſtate of mankind only under the gracious government of a Mediator; and we but ſeldom realize what our miſerable condition would have been, had this gracious adminiſtration never been ſet up. But exclude a Saviour in your thoughts for a moment, and then take a view of the world—helpleſs!—hopeleſs!—under the righteous diſpleaſure of God; and deſpairing of relief!—the very ſuburbs of hell!—the range of malignant devils!—the region of guilt, miſery, and deſpair!—the mouth of the infernal pit!—the gate of hell!—This would have been the condition of our world had it not been for that Jeſus who redeemed it; and yet in this very world he is neglected and deſpiſed.

But you will aſk me, "How comes it that the world was in ſuch an undone, helpleſs, hopeleſs condition without Chriſt? or what are the reaſons of all this?"

The true account of this will appear from theſe two conſiderations, that all mankind are ſinners; and that no other method but the mediation of Chriſt could render the ſalvation of ſinners conſiſtent with the honour of the divine perfections and government, with the public good, and even with the nature of things.

All mankind are ſinners. This is too evident to need proof. They are ſinners, rebels againſt the greateſt and beſt of beings, againſt their Maker, their liberal Benefactor, and their rightful Sovereign, to whom they are under ſtronger and more endearing obligations than they can be under to any creature, or even to the entire ſyſtem of creatures; ſinners, rebels in every part of our guilty globe; none righteous, no, not one; all ſinners, without exception: ſinners from age to age for thouſands of years: thouſands, millions, innumerable multitudes of ſinners. What an obnoxious race is this! There appears no difficulty in the way of juſtice to puniſh ſuch creatures. But what ſeeming inſuperable difficulties appear in the way of their ſalvation! Let me mention a few of them

them to recommend that bleſſed Saviour who has removed them all.

If ſuch ſinners be ſaved, how ſhall the holineſs and juſtice of God be diſplayed? How ſhall he give an honourable view of himſelf to all worlds, as a Being of perfect purity, and an enemy to all moral evil?

If ſuch ſinners be ſaved, how ſhall the honour of the divine government and law be ſecured? How will the dignity of the law appear, if a race of rebels may trifle with it with impunity? What a ſorry law muſt that be that has no ſanctions, or whoſe ſanctions may be diſpenſed with at pleaſure? What a contemptible government, that may be inſulted and rejected, and the offender admitted into favour without exemplary puniſhment! No government can ſubſiſt upon ſuch principles of exceſſive indulgence.

How can ſuch ſinners be ſaved, and yet the good of the public ſecured, which is always the end of every wiſe and good ruler? By the public good I do not mean the happineſs of mankind alone, but I mean the happineſs of all worlds of reaſonable creatures collectively, in compariſon of which the happineſs of mankind alone may be only a private intereſt, which ſhould always give way to the public good. Now ſin has a direct tendency, not only according to law, but according to the nature of things, to ſcatter miſery and ruin wherever its infection reaches. Therefore the public good cannot be properly conſulted without giving a loud and effectual warning againſt all ſin, and dealing with offenders in ſuch a manner as to deter others from offending. But how can this be done? how can the ſinner be ſaved, and yet the evil of ſin be diſplayed, and all other beings be deterred from it for ever? How can ſin be diſcouraged by pardoning it? its evil diſplayed by letting the criminal eſcape puniſhment? Theſe are ſuch difficulties, that nothing but divine wiſdom could ever ſurmount them.

Theſe difficulties lie in the way of a mere pardon and exemption from puniſhment: but ſalvation includes

cludes more than this. When ſinners are ſaved, they are not only pardoned but received into high favour, made the children, the friends, the courtiers of the King of Heaven. They are not only delivered from puniſhment, but alſo advanced to a ſtate of perfect poſitive happineſs; and nothing ſhort of this can render ſuch creatures as we happy. Now, in this view, the difficulties riſe ſtill higher, and it is the more worthy of obſervation, as this is not generally the caſe in human governments; and as men are apt to form their notions of the divine government by human, they are leſs ſenſible of theſe difficulties.—But this is indeed the true ſtate of the caſe here; how can the ſinner be not only delivered from puniſhment, but alſo advanced to a ſtate of perfect happineſs? not only eſcape the diſpleaſure of his offended Sovereign, but be received into full favour, and advanced to the higheſt honour and dignity? how can this be done without caſting a cloud over the purity and juſtice of the Lord of all; without ſinking his law and government into contempt; without diminiſhing the evil of ſin, and emboldening others to venture upon it, and ſo at once injuring the character of the ſupreme Ruler, and the public good? How can ſinners, I ſay, be ſaved without the ſalvation being attended with theſe bad conſequences?

And here you muſt remember, that theſe conſequences muſt be provided againſt. To ſave men at random, without conſidering the conſequences, to diſtribute happineſs to private perſons with an undiſtinguiſhing hand, this would be at once inconſiſtent with the character of the ſupreme Magiſtrate of the univerſe, and with the public good. Private perſons are at liberty to forgive private offences; nay, it is their duty to forgive; and they can hardly offend by way of exceſs in the generous virtues of mercy and compaſſion. But the caſe is otherwiſe with a magiſtrate; he is obliged to conſult the dignity of his government and the intereſt of the public; and he may eaſily carry his lenity to a very dangerous extreme, and by his tenderneſs

derneſs to criminals do an extenſive injury to the ſtate. This is particularly the caſe with regard to the great God, the univerſal ſupreme Magiſtrate of all worlds. And this ought to be ſeriouſly conſidered by thoſe men of looſe principles among us, who look upon God only under the fond character of a father, or a being of infinite mercy; and thence conclude, they have little to fear from him for all their audacious iniquities. There is no abſolute neceſſity that ſinners ſhould be ſaved: juſtice may be ſuffered to take place upon them.—But there is the moſt abſolute neceſſity that the Ruler of the world ſhould both be, and appear to be, holy and juſt. There is the moſt abſolute neceſſity that he ſhould ſupport the dignity of his government, and guard it from contempt, that he ſhould ſtrike all worlds with a proper horror of ſin, and repreſent it in its genuine infernal colours, and ſo conſult the good of the whole, rather than a part. There is, I ſay, the higheſt and moſt abſolute neceſſity for theſe things; and they cannot be diſpenſed with as matters of arbitrary pleaſure. And unleſs theſe ends can be anſwered in the ſalvation of men, they cannot be ſaved at all. No, they muſt all periſh, rather than God ſhould act out of character, as the ſupreme Magiſtrate of the univerſe, or beſtow private favours to criminals, to the detriment of the public.

And in this lay the difficulty. Call a council of all the ſages and wiſe men of the world, and they can never get over this difficulty, without borrowing aſſiſtance from the goſpel. Nay, this, no doubt, puzzled all the angelic intelligences, who pry ſo deep into the myſteries of heaven, before the goſpel was fully revealed. Methinks the angels, when they ſaw the fall of man, gave him up as deſperate. "Alas! (they cried) the poor creature is gone! he and all his numerous race are loſt for ever." This, they knew, had been the doom of their fellow angels that ſinned; and could they hope better for man? Then they had not ſeen any of the wonders of pardoning love and mercy; and

and could they have once thought that *that* glorious perſon, who filled the middle throne, and was their Creator and Lord, would ever become a man, and die, like a criminal, to redeem an inferior rank of creatures? No, this thought they would probably have ſhuddered at as blaſphemy.

And muſt we then give up ourſelves and all our race as loſt beyond recovery? There are huge and ſeemingly inſuperable difficulties in the way; and we have ſeen that neither men nor angels can preſcribe any relief. But *ſing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: ſhout ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into ſinging, ye mountains, O foreſt, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himſelf in Iſrael.* Iſaiah xliv. 23. Which leads me to add,

II. My text implies, that through Jeſus Chriſt a way is opened for your ſalvation. He, and he only was found equal to the undertaking; and before him all theſe mountains became a plain; all theſe difficulties vaniſh; and now God can be juſt, can ſecure the dignity of his character, as the Ruler of the world, and anſwer all the ends of government, and yet juſtify and ſave the ſinner that believeth in Jeſus.

This is plainly implied in this glorious epitome of the goſpel: *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* Without this gift all was loſt: but now, whoſoever believeth in him may be ſaved; ſaved in a moſt honourable way. This will appear more particularly if we conſider the tendency the mediation of Chriſt had to remove the difficulties mentioned. But I would promiſe two general remarks.

The firſt is, That God being conſidered in this affair in his public character, as ſupreme Magiſtrate, or Governor of the world, all the puniſhment which he is concerned to ſee inflicted upon ſin is only ſuch as anſwers the ends of government. Private revenge

muſt vent itſelf on the very perſon of the offender, or be diſappointed. But to a ruler, as ſuch, it may in ſome caſes be indifferent, whether the puniſhment be ſuſtained by the very perſon that offended, or by a ſubſtitute ſuffering in his ſtead. It may alſo be indifferent whether the very ſame puniſhment, as to kind and degree, threatened in the law, be inflicted, or a puniſhment equivalent to it. If the honour of the ruler and his government be maintained, if all diſobedience be properly diſcountenanced; if, in ſhort, all the ends of government can be anſwered, ſuch things as theſe are indifferences. Conſequently, if theſe ends ſhould be anſwered by Chriſt's ſuffering in the ſtead of ſinners, there would be no objection againſt it. This remark introduces another, namely, (2) That Jeſus Chriſt was ſuch a perſon that his ſuffering as the ſubſtitute or ſurety of ſinners, anſwered all the ends of government which could be anſwered by the execution of the puniſhment upon the ſinners themſelves. To impoſe ſuffering upon the innocent, when unwilling, is unjuſt; but Jeſus was willing to undertake the dreadful taſk. And beſides, he was a perſon *(ſui juris)* at his own diſpoſal, his own property, and therefore he had a right to diſpoſe of his life as he pleaſed; and there was a merit in his conſenting to that which he was not obliged to previous to his conſent. He was alſo a perſon of infinite dignity, and infinitely beloved by his Father; and theſe conſiderations rendered the merit of his ſufferings for a ſhort time, and another kind of puniſhment than that of hell, equal, more than equal to the everlaſting ſufferings of ſinners themſelves. Jeſus Chriſt was alſo above law; that is, not obliged to be ſubject to that law which he had made for his creatures, and conſequently his obedience to the law, not being neceſſary for himſelf, might be imputed to others: whereas creatures are incapable of works of ſupererogation, or of doing more than they are bound to do, being obliged to obey their divine lawgiver for themſelves to the utmoſt extent

extent of their abilities, and conſequently their obedience, however perfect, can be ſufficient only for themſelves, but cannot be imputed to others. Thus it appears, in general, that the ends of government are as effectually anſwered by the ſufferings of Chriſt in the room of ſinners, as they could be by the everlaſting puniſhment of the ſinners themſelves; nay, we ſhall preſently find they are anſwered in a more ſtriking and illuſtrious manner. To mention particulars:

Was it neceſſary that the holineſs and juſtice of God ſhould be diſplayed in the ſalvation of ſinners? See how bright they ſhine in a ſuffering Saviour! Now it appears that ſuch is the holineſs and juſtice of God, that he will not let even his own Son eſcape unpuniſhed, when he ſtands in the law-place of ſinners, though guilty only by the ſlight ſtain (may I ſo ſpeak) of imputation. Could the execution of everlaſting puniſhment upon the hateful criminals themſelves ever give ſo bright a diſplay of theſe attributes? It were impoſſible. Again,

Was it a difficulty to ſave ſinners, and yet maintain the rights of the divine government, and the honour of the law? See how this difficulty is removed by the obedience and death of Chriſt! Now it appears, that the rights of the divine government are ſo ſacred and inviolable, that they muſt be maintained, though the darling Son of God ſhould fall a ſacrifice to juſtice; and that not one offence againſt this government can be pardoned, without his making a full atonement. Now it appears, that the ſupreme Ruler is not to be trifled with, but that his injured honour muſt be repaired, though at the expence of his Son's blood and life. Now, the precept of the law is perfectly obeyed in every part, and a full equivalent to its penalty endured, by a perſon of infinite dignity; and it is only upon this footing, that is, of complete ſatisfaction to all the demands of the law, that any of the rebellious ſons of men can be reſtored into favour. This is a ſatisfaction which Chriſt alone could give: to ſinners

ners it is utterly impoſſible, either by doing or ſuffering. They cannot *do* all the things that are written in the law; nor can they *endure* its penalty, without being for ever miſerable: and therefore the law has received a more complete ſatisfaction in Chriſt than it would ever receive from the offenders themſelves. Further,

Was it a difficulty how ſinners might be ſaved, and yet the evil of ſin be diſplayed in all its horrors? Go to the croſs of Chriſt; there, ye fools that make a mock of ſin, there learn its malignity, and its hatefulneſs to the great God. There you may ſee it is ſo great an evil, that when it is but imputed to the man that is God's fellow, as the ſurety of ſinners, it cannot eſcape puniſhment. No, when that dreadful ſtain lay upon him, immediately the commiſſion was given to divine juſtice, *Awake O ſword, againſt my ſhepherd, againſt the man that is my fellow, ſaith the Lord of hoſts; ſmite the ſhepherd.* Zech. xiii. 7.—When Chriſt ſtood in the room of ſinners, even the Father ſpared not his own Son, but gave him up to death. That the criminals themſelves, who are an inferior race of creatures, ſhould not eſcape would not be ſtrange: but what an enormous evil muſt that be, which cannot be connived at even in the favourite of heaven, the only begotten Son of God! Surely nothing beſides could give ſo ſtriking a diſplay of its malignity!

Was it a difficulty how to reconcile the ſalvation of ſinners, and the public good? that is, how to forgive ſin, and yet give an effectual warning againſt it? How to receive the ſinner into favour, and advance him to the higheſt honour and happineſs, and in the mean time deter all other beings from offending? All this is provided for in the ſufferings of Chriſt as a ſurety. Let all worlds look to his croſs, and receive the warning which his wounds, and groans, and blood, and dying agonies proclaim aloud; and ſure they can never dare to offend after the example of man. Now they may ſee that the only inſtance of pardon to be found in the univerſe was not brought about but by

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ſuch means as are not likely to be repeated; by the incarnation and death of the Lord of Glory. And can they flatter themſelves that he will leave his throne, and hang upon a croſs, as often as any of his creatures wantonly dare to offend him? No; ſuch a miracle as this, the utmoſt effort of divine grace, is not often to be renewed; and therefore, if they dare to ſin, it is at their peril. They have no reaſon to flatter themſelves they ſhall be favoured like fallen man; but rather to expect they ſhall ſhare in the doom of the fallen angels.

Or if they ſhould think ſin may eſcape with but a ſlight puniſhment, here they may be convinced of the contrary. If the Darling of Heaven, the Lord of Glory, though perſonally innocent, ſuffers ſo much when ſin is but imputed to him, what ſhall the ſinners themſelves feel, who can claim no favour upon the footing of their own importance, or perſonal innocence? "If theſe things be done in the green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?"

Thus, my brethren, you may ſee how a way is opened through Jeſus Chriſt for our ſalvation. All the ends of government may be anſwered, and yet you pardoned, and made happy. Thoſe attributes of the divine nature, ſuch as mercy and juſtice, which ſeemed to claſh, are now reconciled; now they mingle their beams, and both ſhine with a brighter glory in the ſalvation of ſinners, than either of them could apart. And muſt you not acknowledge this divine God-like ſcheme? Can you look round you over the works of the creation, and ſee the divine wiſdom in every object, and can you not perceive the divine agency in this ſtill more glorious work of redemption? Redemption, which gives a full view of the Deity, not as the ſun in eclipſe, half dark, half bright, but as

> A God all o'er, conſummate, abſolute,
> Full orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete. YOUNG.

And ſhall not men and angels join in wonder and praiſe at the ſurvey of this amazing ſcheme? Angels

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are wrapt in wonder and praiſe, and will be ſo to all eternity. See! how they pry into this myſtery! hark, how they ſing! "Glory to God in the higheſt;" and celebrate the Lamb that was ſlain! And ſhall not men, who are perſonally intereſted in the affair, join with them? O! are there none to join with them in this aſſembly? Surely, none can refuſe!

Now, ſince all obſtructions are removed on God's part, that lay in the way of our ſalvation, why ſhould we not all be ſaved together? What is there to hinder our crowding into heaven promiſcuouſly? Or what is there requiſite on our part, in order to make us partakers of this ſalvation? Here it is proper to paſs on to the next truth inferred from the text, namely,

III. That the grand pre-requiſite to your being ſaved in this way, is faith in Jeſus Chriſt. Though the obſtructions on God's part are removed by the death of Chriſt, yet there is one remaining in the ſinner, which cannot be removed without his conſent; and which, while it remains, renders his ſalvation impoſſible in the nature of things; that is, the depravity and corruption of his nature. Till this is cured, he cannot reliſh thoſe fruitions and employments in which the happineſs of heaven conſiſts, and conſequently he cannot be happy there. Therefore there is a neceſſity, in the very nature of things, that he ſhould be made holy, in order to be ſaved; nay, his ſalvation itſelf conſiſts in holineſs. Now, faith is the root of all holineſs in a ſinner. Without a firm realizing belief of the great truths of the goſpel, it is impoſſible a ſinner ſhould be ſanctified by their influence: and without a particular faith in Jeſus Chriſt, he cannot drive from him thoſe ſanctifying influences by which alone he can be made holy, and which are conveyed through Jeſus Chriſt, and through him alone.

Further: It would be highly incongruous, and indeed impoſſible, to ſave a ſinner againſt his will, or in a way he diſlikes. Now, faith, as you ſhall ſee preſently, principally conſiſts in a hearty conſent to and approbation

approbation of the way of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt, the only way in which a ſinner can be ſaved conſiſtently with the divine honour; ſo that the conſtitution of the goſpel is not only juſt, but as merciful as it can be, when it ordains, that only *he that believeth ſhall be ſaved; but that he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.*

Again: We cannot be ſaved through Jeſus Chriſt, till his righteouſneſs be ſo far made ours as that it will anſwer the demands of the law for us, and procure the favour of God to us; but his righteouſneſs cannot be thus imputed to us, or accounted ours in law, till we are ſo united to him as to be one in law, or one legal perſon with him. Now faith is the bond of union; faith is that which intereſts us in Chriſt; and therefore without faith we cannot receive any benefit from his righteouſneſs.

Here then a moſt intereſting inquiry preſents itſelf: "What is it to believe in Jeſus Chriſt? or what is that faith which is the grand pre-requiſite to ſalvation?" If you are capable of attention to the moſt intereſting affair in all the world, attend to this with the utmoſt ſeriouſneſs and ſolemnity.

Faith in Chriſt includes ſomething ſpeculative in it; that is, it includes a ſpeculative, rational belief, upon the teſtimony of God, that Jeſus Chriſt is the only Saviour of men. But yet it is not entirely a ſpeculation, like the faith of multitudes among us: it is a more practical experimental thing; and that you may underſtand its nature, you muſt take notice of the following particulars.

(1.) Faith pre-ſuppoſes a deep ſenſe of our undone, helpleſs condition. I told you before, this is the condition of the world without Chriſt; and you muſt be ſenſible at heart that this is your condition in particular, before you can believe in him as your Saviour. He came to be a Saviour in a deſperate caſe, when no relief could poſſibly be had from any other quarter, and you cannot receive him under that character till

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you feel yourſelves in ſuch a caſe; therefore, in order to your believing, all your pleas and excuſes for your ſins muſt be ſilenced, all your high conceit of your own goodneſs muſt be mortified, all your dependence upon your own righteouſneſs, upon the merit of your prayers, your repentance, and good works, muſt be caſt down, and you muſt feel that indeed you lie at mercy, that God may juſtly reject you for ever, and that all you can do can bring him under no obligation to ſave you. Theſe things you muſt be deeply ſenſible of, otherwiſe you can never receive the Lord Jeſus in that view in which he is propoſed to you, namely, as a Saviour in a deſperate caſe.

I wiſh and pray you may this day ſee yourſelves in this true, though mortifying light. It is the want of this ſenſe of things that keeps ſuch crowds of perſons unbelievers among us. It is the want of this that cauſes the Lord Jeſus to be ſo little eſteemed, ſo little ſought for, ſo little deſired among us. In ſhort, it is the want of this that is the great occaſion of ſo many periſhing from under the goſpel, and, as it were, from between the hands of a Saviour. It is this, alas! that cauſes them to periſh, like the impenitent thief on the croſs, with a Saviour by their ſide. O that you once rightly knew yourſelves, you would then ſoon know Jeſus Chriſt, and receive ſalvation from his hands!

(2.) Faith implies the enlightening of the underſtanding to diſcover the ſuitableneſs of Jeſus Chriſt as a Saviour, and the excellency of the way of ſalvation through him. While the ſinner lies undone and helpleſs in himſelf, and looking about in vain for ſome relief, it pleaſes a gracious God to ſhine into his heart, and enable him to ſee his glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. Now this once neglected Saviour appears not only abſolutely neceſſary, but alſo all-glorious and lovely, and the ſinner's heart is rapt away, and for ever captivated with his beauty: now the neglected goſpel appears in a new light, as different from all his former

mer apprehenſions as if it were quite another thing. I have not time at preſent to enlarge upon this diſcovery of Chriſt and the goſpel which faith includes; and indeed ſhould I dwell upon it ever ſo long, I could not convey juſt ideas of it to ſuch of you as have never had the happy experience of it. In ſhort, the Lord Jeſus, and the way of ſalvation through him, appear perfectly ſuitable, all-ſufficient, and all-glorious; and in conſequence of this,

(3.) The ſinner is enabled to embrace this Saviour with all his heart, and to give a voluntary cheerful conſent to this glorious ſcheme of ſalvation. Now all his former unwillingneſs and reluctance are ſubdued, and his heart no more draws back from the terms of the goſpel, but he complies with them, and that not merely out of conſtraint and neceſſity, but out of free choice, and with the greateſt pleaſure and delight. How does his heart now cling to the bleſſed Jeſus with the moſt affectionate endearment! How is he loſt in wonder, joy, and gratitude at the ſurvey of the divine perfections, as diſplayed in this method of redemption! How does he rejoice in it, as not only bringing happineſs to him, but glory to God; as making his ſalvation not only conſiſtent with, but a bright illuſtration of, the divine perfections, and the dignity of his government! While he had no other but the low and ſelfiſh principles of corrupt nature he had no concern about the honour of God; if he might be but ſaved it was all he was ſolicitous about: but now he has a noble generous heart; now he is concerned that God ſhould be honoured in his ſalvation, and this method of ſalvation is recommended and endeared to him by the thought that it ſecures to God the ſupremacy, and makes his ſalvation ſubſervient to the divine glory.

(4.) Faith in Jeſus Chriſt implies a humble truſt or dependence upon him alone for the pardon of ſin, acceptance with God, and every bleſſing. As I told you before, the ſinner's ſelf-confidence is mortified;

he gives up all hopes of acceptance upon the footing of his own righteouſneſs: he is filled with ſelf-deſpair, and yet he does not deſpair abſolutely; he does not give up himſelf as loſt, but has cheerful hopes of becoming a child of God, and being for ever happy, guilty and unworthy as he is; and what are theſe hopes founded upon? Why, upon the mere free grace and mercy of God, through the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. On this he ventures a guilty, unworthy, helpleſs ſoul, and finds it a firm, immoveable foundation, while every other ground of dependence proves but a quickſand. There are many that flatter themſelves they put their truſt in God; but their truſt wants ſundry qualifications eſſential to a true faith. It is not the truſt of a humble helpleſs ſoul that draws all its encouragement from the mere mercy of God, and the free indefinite offer of the goſpel; but it is the preſumptuous truſt of a proud ſelf-confident ſinner, who draws his encouragement in part at leaſt from his own imaginary goodneſs and importance. It is not a truſt in the mercy of God through Jeſus Chriſt, as the only medium through which it can be honourably conveyed; but either in the abſolute mercy of God, which, without a proper reference to a Mediator, or in his mercy, as in ſome meaſure deſerved or moved by ſomething in the ſinner. Examine whether your truſt in God will ſtand this teſt.

I have now given you a brief anſwer to that grand queſtion, What is it to believe in Jeſus Chriſt? and I hope you underſtand it, though I have not enlarged ſo much upon it as I willingly would. I ſhall only add, that this faith may alſo be known by its inſeparable effects; which are ſuch as follow. Faith purifies the heart, and is a lively principle of inward holineſs. Faith is always productive of good works, and leads us to univerſal obedience: faith overcomes the world and all its temptations: faith realizes eternal things, and brings them near; and hence it is defined by the apoſtle, *The ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evi-*

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dence of things not ſeen. Heb. xi. 1. Here I have a very important queſtion to propoſe to you: Who among you can ſay, "Well, notwithſtanding all my imperfections, and all my doubts and fears, I cannot but humbly hope, after the beſt examination I can make, that ſuch a faith has been produced in this heart of mine?" And can you ſay ſo indeed? Then I bring you glad tidings of great joy; you ſhall be ſaved: yes, ſaved you ſhall be, in ſpite of earth and hell; ſaved, however great your paſt ſins have been. Which thought introduces the glorious truth that comes next in order, namely,

IV. My text implies, that every one, without exception, whatever his former character has been, that is enabled to believe in Jeſus Chriſt, ſhall certainly be ſaved.

The number or aggravations of ſin do not alter the caſe; and the reaſon is, the ſinner is not received into favour, in whole or in part, upon the account of any thing perſonal, but ſolely and entirely upon the account of the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. Now, this righteouſneſs is perfectly equal to all the demands of the law; and therefore, when this righteouſneſs is made over to the ſinner as his by imputation, the law has no more demands upon him for great ſins than for ſmall, for many than for few; becauſe all demands are fully ſatisfied by the obedience of Jeſus Chriſt to the law. You ſee that ſinners of all characters who believe in him are put upon an equality in this reſpect: they are all admitted upon one common footing, the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and that is as ſufficient for one as another.

This encouraging truth has the moſt abundant ſupport from the holy ſcriptures. Obſerve the agreeable indefinite *whoſoever* ſo often repeated. "Whoſoever believeth in him, ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life." Whoſoever he be, however vile, however guilty, however unworthy, if he does but believe, he ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life. What

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an agreeable aſſurance is this from the lips of him who has the final ſtates of men at his diſpoſal! The ſame bleſſed lips have alſo declared, *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wiſe caſt out.* John vi. 37. And *Whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* Rev. xxii. 17. He has given you more than bare words to eſtabliſh you in the belief of this truth: upon this principle he has acted, chooſing ſome of the moſt abandoned ſinners to make them examples, not of his juſtice, as we might expect, but of his mercy, for the encouragement of others. In the days of his fleſh he was reproached by his enemies for his friendſhip to publicans and ſinners; but ſure it is, inſtead of reproaching, we muſt love him on this account. When he roſe from the dead he did not riſe with angry reſentment againſt his murderers; no, but he ſingles them out from a world of ſinners, to make them the firſt offers of pardon through the blood which they had juſt ſhed. He orders *that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.* Luke xxiv. 47. At Jeruſalem, where he had been crucified a few days before, there he orders the firſt publication of pardon and life to be made. You may ſee what monſters of ſin he choſe to make the monuments of his grace in Corinth. *Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God.* What a diſmal catalogue is this! It is no wonder ſuch a crew ſhould not inherit the kingdom of heaven; they are fit only for the infernal priſon; and yet, aſtoniſhing! it follows, *ſuch were ſome of you; but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the ſpirit of our God.* 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. What ſinner after this can deſpair of mercy upon his believing in Jeſus! St. Paul was another inſtance of the ſame kind: "This," ſays he, "is a faithful ſaying;" a ſaying that may be depended on as true, "and worthy

worthy of all acceptation," from a guilty world, *that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief: howbeit, for this cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me the chief, Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them which ſhould hereafter believe in him to life everlaſting.* 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. A ſinner of leſs ſize would not have anſwered this end ſo well; but if Saul the perſecutor obtains mercy upon his believing, who can deſpair?

You ſee upon the whole, my brethren, you are not excluded from Chriſt and life by the greatneſs of your ſins; but if you periſh it muſt be from another cauſe; it muſt be on account of your wilful unbelief in not accepting of Jeſus Chriſt as your Saviour. If you reject him, then indeed you muſt periſh, however ſmall your ſins have been; for it is only his death that can make atonement for the ſlighteſt guilt; and if you have no intereſt in that, the guilt of the ſmalleſt ſin will ſink you into ruin.

Here is a door wide enough for you all, if you will but enter in by faith. Come then, enter in, you that have hitherto claimed an horrid precedence in ſin, that have been ringleaders in vice, come now take the lead, and ſhew others the way to Jeſus Chriſt; harlots, publicans, thieves, and murderers, if ſuch be among you, there is ſalvation even for you, if you will but believe. O! how aſtoniſhing is the love of God diſcovered in this way: a conſideration which introduces the laſt inference from my text, namely,

V. That the conſtitution of this method of ſalvation, or the miſſion of a Saviour into our world, is a moſt ſtriking and aſtoniſhing diſplay of the love of God:—*God ſo loved the world as to give his only begotten Son*, &c.

View the ſcheme all through, and you will diſcover love, infinite love, in every part of it. Conſider the great God as ſelf-happy and independent upon all his creatures, and what but love, ſelf-moved love, could excite him to make ſuch proviſion for an inferior part of

of them! Conſider the world ſunk in ſin, not only without merit, but moſt deſerving of everlaſting puniſhment, and what but love could move him to have mercy upon ſuch a world? Conſider the Saviour provided, not an angel, not the higheſt creature, but his Son, his only begotten Son; and what but love could move him to appoint ſuch a Saviour? Conſider the manner in which he was ſent, as a gift, a free unmerited gift; "God gave his only begotten Son:" And what but infinite love could give ſuch an unſpeakable gift? Conſider the bleſſings conferred through this Saviour, deliverance from perdition and the enjoyment of everlaſting life, and what but the love of God could confer ſuch bleſſings? Conſider the condition upon which theſe bleſſings are offered, faith, that humble, ſelf-emptied grace, ſo ſuitable to the circumſtances of a poor ſinner, that brings nothing but receives all, and what but divine love could make ſuch a gracious appointment? *It is by faith, that it may be of grace.* Rom. iv. 16. Conſider the indefinite extent, or the univerſality of the offer, which takes in ſinners of the vileſt characters, and excepts againſt none: *Whoſoever believeth ſhall not periſh*, &c. O what love is this! But I muſt leave it as the theme of your meditations, not only in the houſe of your pilgrimage, but through all eternity: eternity will be ſhort enough to pry into this myſtery, and it will employ the underſtandings of men and angels through the revolutions of eternal ages.

And now, my brethren, to draw towards a concluſion, I would hold a treaty with you this day about the reconciliation to God through Jeſus Chriſt. I have this day ſet life and death before you: I have opened to you the method of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt; the only method in which you can be ſaved; the only method that could afford a gleam of hope to ſuch a ſinner as I in my late approach to the eternal world.*

And

* This ſermon was preached a little after recovery from a ſevere fit of ſickneſs, and it is dated Hanover, Oct. 2, 1757.

And now I would bring the matter home, and propoſe it to you all to conſent to be ſaved in this method, or, in other words, to believe in the only begotten Son of God; this propoſal I ſeriouſly make to you; and let heaven and earth, and your own conſciences, witneſs that it is made to you; I alſo inſiſt for a determinate anſwer this day; the matter will not admit of a delay, and the duty is ſo plain, that there is no need of time to deliberate. A Roman ambaſſador, treating about peace with the ambaſſador of a neighbouring ſtate, if I remember rightly, and finding him deſirous to gain time by ſhuffling and tedious negociations, drew a circle about him, and ſaid, "I demand an anſwer before you go out of this circle."—Such a circle let the walls of this houſe, or the extent of my voice, be to you: before you leave this houſe, or go out of hearing, I inſiſt on a full deciſive anſwer to this propoſal, Whether you will believe in Jeſus Chriſt this day or not?

But before I proceed any farther, I would remove one ſtumbling-block out of your way. You are apt to object, "You teach us that faith is the gift of God, and that we cannot believe of ourſelves; why then do you exhort us to it? or how can we be concerned to endeavour that which it is impoſſible for us to do?"

In anſwer to this, I grant the premiſes are true; and God forbid I ſhould ſo much as intimate that faith is the ſpontaneous growth of corrupt nature, or that you can come to Chriſt without the Father's drawing you: but the concluſions you draw from theſe premiſes are very erroneous. I exhort and perſuade you to believe in Jeſus Chriſt, becauſe it is while ſuch means are uſed with ſinners, and by the uſe of them, that it pleaſes God to enable them to comply, or to work faith in them. I would therefore uſe thoſe means which God is pleaſed to bleſs for this end. I exhort you to believe, in order to ſet you upon the trial; for it is putting it to trial, and that only, which can fully convince you of your own inability to believe; and

till

till you are convinced of this, you can never expect ſtrength from God. I exhort you to believe, becauſe, ſinful and enfeebled as you are, you are capable of uſing various preparatives to faith. You may attend upon prayer, hearing, and all the outward means of grace with natural ſerioufneſs; you may endeavour to get acquainted with your own helpleſs condition, and, as it were, put yourſelves in the way of divine mercy; and though all theſe means cannot of themſelves produce faith in you, yet it is only in the uſe of theſe means you are to expect divine grace to work it in you: never was it yet produced in one ſoul, while lying ſupine, lazy, and inactive.

I hope you now ſee good reaſons why I ſhould exhort you to believe, and alſo perceive my deſign in it; I therefore renew the propoſal to you, that you ſhould this day, as guilty, unworthy, ſelf-deſpairing ſinners, accept of the only begotten Son of God as your Saviour, and fall in with the goſpel-method of ſalvation; and I once more demand your anſwer. I would by no means, if poſſible, leave the pulpit this day till I have effectually recommended the bleſſed Jeſus, my Lord and Maſter, to your acceptance. I am ſtrongly bound by the vows and reſolutions of a ſick bed to recommend him to you; and now I would endeavour to perform my vows. I would have us all this day before we part conſent to God's covenant, that we may go away juſtified to our houſes.

To this I perſuade and exhort you, in the name and by the authority of the great God, by the death of Jeſus Chriſt for ſinners, by your own moſt urgent and abſolute neceſſity, by the immenſe bleſſings propoſed in the goſpel, and by the heavy curſe denounced againſt unbelievers.

All the bleſſings of the goſpel, pardon of ſin, ſanctifying grace, eternal life, and whatever you can want, ſhall become yours this day, if you but believe in the Son of God: then let deſolation over-run our land, let public and private calamities crowd upon you, and

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make you ſo many Jobs for poverty and affliction, ſtill your main intereſt is ſecure; the ſtorms and waves of trouble can only bear you to heaven, and haſten your paſſage to the harbour of eternal reſt. Let devils accuſe you before God, let conſcience indict you and bring you in guilty, let the fiery law make its demands upon you, you have a righteouſneſs in Jeſus Chriſt that is ſufficient to anſwer all demands, and, having received it by faith, you may plead it as your own in law. Happy ſouls! rejoice in hope of the glory of God, for your hope will never make you aſhamed!

But I expect, as uſual, ſome of you will refuſe to comply with this propoſal. This, alas! has been the uſual fate of the bleſſed goſpel in all ages and in all countries; as ſome have received it, ſo ſome have rejected it. That old complaint of Iſaiah has been juſtly repeated thouſands of times; *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Iſai. liii. 1. And is there no reaſon to pour it out from a broken heart over ſome of you, my dear people! Are you all this day determined to believe? If ſo, I pronounce you bleſſed in the name of the Lord; but if not, I muſt denounce your doom.

Be it known to you then from the living God, that if you thus continue in unbelief, you ſhut the door of mercy againſt yourſelves, and exclude yourſelves from eternal life. Whatever ſplendid appearances of virtue, whatever amiable qualities, whatever ſeeming good works you have, the expreſs ſentence of the goſpel lies in full force againſt you, *He that believeth not ſhall be damned.* Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed on the only begotten Son of God.* John iii. 18. *He that believeth not ſhall not ſee life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him.* John iii. 36. This is your doom repeatedly pronounced by him whom you muſt own to be the beſt friend of human nature; and if he condemn, who can juſtify you?

Be it alſo known to you, that you will not only periſh, but you will periſh with peculiar aggravations; you will fall with no common ruin; you will envy the lot of heathens who periſhed without the law: for O! you incur the peculiarly enormous guilt of rejecting the goſpel, and putting contempt upon the Son of God. This is an horrid exploit of wickedneſs, and this God reſents above all the other crimes of which human nature is incapable. Hence Chriſt is come for judgment as well as for mercy into this world, and he is ſet for the fall as well as the riſing again of many in Iſrael. You now enjoy the light of the goſpel, which has conducted many through this dark world to eternal day; but remember alſo, *this is the condemnation*; that is, it is the occaſion of the moſt aggravated condemnation, *that light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather than light*. On this principle Jeſus pronounced the doom of Chorazin and Bethſaida more intolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Matth. xi. 21, 22. And would it not be hard to find a place in Virginia where the doom of unbelievers is likely to be ſo terrible as among us?

And now does not all this move you? Are you not alarmed at the thought of periſhing; of periſhing by the hand of a Saviour rejected and deſpiſed; periſhing under the ſtain of his profaned blood; periſhing not only under the curſe of the law, but under that of the goſpel, which is vaſtly heavier? O! are you hardy enough to venture upon ſuch a doom! This doom is unavoidable if you refuſe to comply with the propoſal now made to you.

I muſt now conclude the treaty; but for my own acquittance, I muſt take witneſs that I have endeavoured to diſcharge my commiſſion, whatever reception you give it. I call heaven and earth, and your own conſciences to witneſs, that life and ſalvation, through Jeſus Chriſt, have been offered to you on this day; and if you reject it, remember it; remember it whenever you ſee this place; remember it whenever

ever you ſee my face, or one another; remember it, that you may witneſs for me at the ſupreme tribunal that I am clear of your blood. Alas! you will remember it among a thouſand painful reflections millions of ages hence, when the remembrance of it will rend your hearts like a vulture. Many ſermons forgotten upon earth are remembered in hell, and haunt the guilty mind for ever. O that you would believe, and ſo prevent this dreadful effect from the preſent ſermon!

SERMON III.

Sinners intreated to be reconciled to God.

2 Cor. v. 20. *We then are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us: we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.*

TO preſide in the ſolemnities of public worſhip, to direct your thoughts, and chooſe for you the ſubjects of your meditation on thoſe ſacred hours which you ſpend in the houſe of God, and upon the right improvement of which your everlaſting happineſs ſo much depends, this is a province of the moſt tremendous importance that can be devolved upon a mortal; and every man of the ſacred character, who knows what he is about, muſt tremble at the thought, and be often anxiouſly perplexed what ſubject he ſhall chooſe, what he ſhall ſay upon it, and in what manner he ſhall deliver his meſſage. His ſucceſs in a great meaſure depends upon his choice; for, though the bleſſed Spirit is the proper agent, and though the beſt means, without his efficacious concurrence, are altogether fruitleſs, yet he is wont to bleſs thoſe means that are beſt adapted to do good; and after a long courſe of languid and fruitleſs efforts, which ſeem to

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have been unuſually diſowned by my divine Maſter, what text ſhall I chooſe out of the inexhauſtible treaſure of God's word? In what new method ſhall I ſpeak upon it? What new untried experiments ſhall I make? Bleſſed Jeſus! my heavenly Maſter! direct thy poor perplexed ſervant who is at a loſs, and knows not what to do; direct him that has tried, and tried again, all the expedients he could think of, but almoſt in vain, and now ſcarcely knows what it is to hope for ſucceſs! Divine direction, my brethren, has been ſought; and may I hope it is that which has turned my mind to addreſs you this day on the important ſubject of your reconciliation to God, and to become an humble imitator of the great St. Paul, whoſe affecting words I have read to you. *We then are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us: we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.*

The introduction to this paſſage you find in the foregoing verſes, *God hath given to us* (the apoſtles) *the miniſtry of reconciliation*; the ſum and ſubſtance of which is, namely, "That God was in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them." As if he had ſaid, "The great Sovereign of the univerſe, though highly provoked, and juſtly diſpleaſed with our rebellious world, has been ſo gracious as to contrive a plan of reconciliation, whereby they may not only eſcape the puniſhment they deſerve, but alſo be reſtored to the favour of God, and all the privileges of his favourite ſubjects. This plan was laid in Chriſt; that is, it was he who was appointed, and undertook to remove all obſtacles out of the way of their reconciliation, ſo that it might be conſiſtent with the honour and dignity of God and his government. This he performed by a life of perfect obedience and an atoning death, inſtead of rebellious man. Though "he knew no ſin" of his own; yet "he was made ſin," that is, a ſin-offering, or a ſinner by imputation "for us," that we might "be made the righteouſneſs of God in him." Thus all hindrances

hindrances are removed on God's part. The plan of a treaty of reconciliation is formed, approved, and ratified in the court of heaven; but then it muſt be publiſhed, all the terms made known, and the conſent of the rebels ſolicited and gained. It is not enough that all impediments to peace are removed on God's part; they muſt alſo be removed on the part of man: the reconciliation muſt be mutual; both the parties muſt agree. Hence ariſes the neceſſity of the miniſtry of reconciliation which was committed to the apoſtles, thoſe prime miniſters of the kingdom of Chriſt, and in a lower ſphere to the ordinary miniſters of the goſpel in every age. The great buſineſs of their office is to publiſh the treaty of peace; that is, the articles of reconciliation, and to uſe every motive to gain the conſent of mankind to theſe articles. It is this office St. Paul is diſcharging, when he ſays, *We are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us: we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.*

We are ambaſſadors for Chriſt. The proper notion of an ambaſſador, is that of a perſon ſent by a king to tranſact affairs in his name, and according to his inſtructions, with foreign ſtates, or part of his ſubjects, to whom he does not think proper to go himſelf and treat with them in his own perſon. Thus a peace is generally concluded between contending nations, not by their kings in perſon, but by their plenipotentiaries acting in their name, and by their authority; and, while they keep to their inſtructions, their negociations and agreements are as valid and authentic as if they were carried on and concluded by their maſters in perſon. Thus the Lord Jeſus Chriſt is not perſonally preſent in our world to manage the treaty of peace himſelf, but he has appointed firſt his apoſtles, and then the miniſters of the goſpel through every age, to carry it on in his name. This is their proper character: they are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, his plenipotentiaries, furniſhed with a commiſſion and inſtructions to make overtures

overtures of reconciliation to a rebel world, and treat with them to gain their conſent.

Indeed, aſpiring eccleſiaſtics have aſſumed high-ſounding titles merely to procure extravagant honours to themſelves. They have called themſelves ambaſſadors of Chriſt, meſſengers from God, the plenipotentiaries and viceroys of heaven, and I know not what, not with a deſign to do honour to their Maſter, but to keep the world in a ſuperſtitious awe of themſelves. This prieſtly pride and inſolence I utterly abhor; and yet I humbly adventure to aſſume the title of an ambaſſador of the great King of heaven, and require you to regard me in this high character: but then you muſt know, that while I am making this claim, I own myſelf obliged inviolably to adhere to the inſtructions of my divine Maſter contained in the Bible. I have no power over your faith; no power to dictate or preſcribe; but my work is only juſt to publiſh the articles of peace as my Maſter has eſtabliſhed and revealed them in his word, without the leaſt addition, diminution, or alteration. I pretend to no higher power than this, and this power I muſt claim, unleſs I would renounce my office; for who can conſiſtently profeſs himſelf a miniſter of Chriſt without aſſerting his right and power to publiſh what his Lord has taught, and communicate his royal inſtructions?

Therefore, without uſurping an equality with St. Paul, or his fellow apoſtles, I muſt tell you in his language, I appear among you this day as the ambaſſador of the moſt high God; I am diſcharging an embaſſy for Chriſt*; and I tell you this with no other deſign than to procure your moſt ſerious regard to what I ſay. If you conſider it only as my declaration, whatever regard you pay to it, the end of my miniſtry will not be anſwered upon you. The end of my office is not to make myſelf the object of your love and veneration, but to reconcile you to God; but you cannot be reconciled to God while you conſider the propoſal

* This is the moſt literal tranſlation of ὡς πρεσβύομεν ὑπὲρ χριστοῦ.

propoſal as made to you only by your fellow mortal. You muſt regard it as made to you by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Mediator between God and man. I not only allow, but even invite and charge you to enquire and judge whether what I ſay be agreeable to my divine inſtructions, which are as open to your inſpection as mine, and to regard it no farther than it is ſo: but if I follow theſe inſtructions, and propoſe the treaty of peace to you juſt as it is concluded in heaven, then I charge you to regard it as propoſed by the Lord of heaven and earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, though through my unworthy lips. Conſider yourſelves this day as the hearers not of a preacher formed out of the clay like yourſelves, but of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Suppoſe him here in perſon treating with you about your reconciliation to God, and what regard you would pay to a propoſal made by him in perſon, with all his divine royalties about him, that you ſhould now ſhew to the treaty I am to negociate with you in his name and ſtead.

The next ſentence in my text binds you ſtill more ſtrongly to this; *as though God did beſeech you by us.* As if he had ſaid, "God the Father alſo concurs in this treaty of peace, as well as Chriſt the great peace-maker; and as we diſcharge an embaſſy for Chriſt, ſo we do alſo for God; and you are to regard our beſeeching and exhorting*, as though the great God did in perſon beſeech and exhort you by us." What aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion is here intimated! not that the miniſters of Chriſt ſhould beſeech you; this would be no mighty condeſcenſion: but that the ſupreme Jehovah ſhould beſeech you; that he ſhould not only command you with a ſtern air of authority as your Sovereign, but as a friend, nay, as a petitioner ſhould affectionately beſeech you, you deſpicable, guilty worms, obnoxious rebels! How aſtoniſhing, how God-like, how unprecedented and inimitable is this condeſcenſion! Let heaven and earth admire and adore! It is

* παρακαλῶν ſignifies *exhorting*, as well as *beſeeching*.

is by us, indeed, by us your poor fellow mortals, that he beſeeches; but O! let not this tempt you to diſregard him or his intreaty: though he employs ſuch mean ambaſſadors, yet conſider his dignity who ſends us, and then you cannot diſregard his meſſage even from our mouth.

The apoſtle, having thus prepared the way, proceeds to the actual exerciſe of his office as an ambaſſador for Chriſt: *We pray you*, ſays he, *in Chriſt's ſtead, be reconciled to God.* As if he had ſaid, "If Chriſt were now preſent in perſon among you, this is what he would propoſe to you, and urge upon you, that you would be reconciled to God; but him the heavens muſt receive till the time of the reſtitution of all things; but he has left us his poor ſervants to officiate in his place as well as we can, and we would proſecute the ſame deſign, we would urge upon you what he would urge, were he to ſpeak; therefore we pray you, in his ſtead, be ye reconciled to God: we earneſtly pray you to be reconciled: that is the utmoſt which ſuch feeble worms as we can do: we can only pray and beg, but your compliance is not within the command of our power; the compliance belongs to you; and remember, if you refuſe, you muſt take it upon yourſelves, and anſwer the conſequence."

Having thus explained the text, I proceed in my poor manner to exemplify it by negociating the treaty with you for your reconciliation to God; and you ſee my buſineſs lies directly with ſuch of you as are as yet enemies to God: you are the only perſons that ſtand in need of reconciliation. As for ſuch of you (and I doubt not but there are ſuch among you) whoſe innate enmity has been ſubdued, and who are become the friends and ſubjects of the King of heaven after your guilty revolt, I muſt deſire you as it were to ſtand by yourſelves for the preſent hour, and help me by your prayers, while I am ſpeaking to your poor brethren, who ſtill continue in that ſtate of hoſtility and rebellion againſt God, in which you once were, and

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the miſeries of which you well know, and ſtill lament and deplore.

But by this propoſal I am afraid I have deprived myſelf of hearers on this ſubject; for have you not all already placed yourſelves among the lovers of God, who conſequently do not need to be reconciled to him? Is not every one of you ready to ſay to me, "If your buſineſs only lies with the enemies of God, you have no concern with me in this diſcourſe? for, God forbid that I ſhould be an enemy to him. I have indeed been guilty of a great many ſins, but I had no bad deſign in them, and never had the leaſt enmity againſt my Maker; ſo far from it, that I ſhudder at the very thought!" This is the firſt obſtacle that I meet with in diſcharging my embaſſy: the embaſſy itſelf is looked upon as needleſs by the perſons concerned, like an attempt to reconcile thoſe that are good friends already. This obſtacle muſt be removed before we can proceed any farther.

I am far from charging any of you with ſo horrid a crime as enmity and rebellion againſt God, who can produce ſatisfactory evidences to your own conſcience that you are his friends. I only deſire that you would not flatter yourſelves, nor draw a raſh and groundleſs concluſion in an affair of ſuch infinite moment, but that you would put the matter to a fair trial, according to evidence, and then let your conſcience paſs an impartial ſentence as your judge, under the ſupreme Judge of the world.

You plead "Not guilty" to the charge, and alledge that you have always loved God; but if this be the caſe, whence is it that you have afforded him ſo few of your affectionate and warm thoughts? Do not your tendereſt thoughts dwell upon the objects of your love? But has not your mind been ſhy of him who gave you your power of thinking? Have not you lived ſtupidly thoughtleſs of him for days and weeks together? Nay, have not ſerious thoughts of him been unwelcome, and made you uneaſy? and have

you not turned every way to avoid them? Have you not often prayed to him, and concurred in other acts of religious worſhip, and yet had but very few or no devout thoughts of him, even at the very time? And is that mind well affected towards him that is ſo averſe to him, and turns every way to ſhun a glance of him? Alas! is this your friendſhip for the God that made you, whoſe you are, and whom you ought to ſerve!

Would you not have indulged the fool's wiſh, that there were no God, had not the horror and impoſſibility of the thing reſtrained you? But, notwithſtanding this reſtraint, has not this blaſphemy ſhed its malignant poiſon at times in your hearts? If there was no God, then you would ſin without controul, and without dread of puniſhment; and how ſweet was this! Then you would have nothing to do with that melancholy thing, religion; and what an agreeable exemption would this be! But is this your love for him, to wiſh the Parent of all being out of being! Alas! can the rankeſt enmity riſe higher!

Again, if you are reconciled to God, whence is it that you are ſecretly, or perhaps openly diſaffected to his image, I mean the purity and ſtrictneſs of his law, and the lineaments of holineſs that appear upon the unfaſhionable religious few? If you loved God, you would of courſe love every thing that bears any reſemblance to him. But are you not conſcious that it is otherwiſe with you; that you murmur and cavil at the reſtraints of God's law, and would much rather abjure it, be free from it, and live as you liſt? Are you not conſcious that nothing expoſes a man more to your ſecret diſguſt and contempt, and perhaps to your public mockery and ridicule, than a ſtrict and holy walk, and a conſcientious obſervance of the duties of devotion? And if you catch your neighbour in any of theſe offences, do not your hearts riſe againſt him? and what is this but the effect of your enmity againſt God? Do you thus diſguſt a man for wearing the genuine

genuine image and reſemblance of your friend? No; the effect of love is quite the reverſe.

Again, If you do but reflect upon the daily ſenſations of your own minds, muſt you not be conſcious that you love other perſons and things more than God? that you love pleaſure, honour, riches, your relations and friends, more than the glorious and ever-bleſſed God? Look into your own hearts, and you will find it ſo: you will find that this, and that, and a thouſand things in this world, engroſs more of your thoughts, your cares, deſires, joys, ſorrows, hopes, and fears, than God, or any of his concerns. Now it is eſſential to the love of God that it be ſupreme. You do not love him truly at all, in the leaſt degree, if you do not love him above all; above all perſons and things in the whole univerſe. He is a jealous God, and will not ſuffer a rival. A lower degree of love for ſupreme excellence is an affront and indignity. Is it not therefore evident, even to your own conviction, that you do not love God at all; and what is this but to be his enemy? To be indifferent towards him, as though he were an inſignificant being, neither good nor evil, a mere cypher; to feel neither love nor hatred towards him, but to neglect him, as if you had no concern with him one way or other; what an horrible diſpoſition is this towards him, who is ſupremely and infinitely glorious and amiable, your Creator, your Sovereign, and Benefactor; who therefore deſerves and demands your higheſt love; or, in the words of his own law, *that you ſhould love him with all your heart, with all your ſoul, with all your mind, and with all your ſtrength.* Mark xii. 30. From what can ſuch indifferency towards him proceed but from diſaffection and enmity? It is in this way that the enmity of men towards God moſt generally diſcovers itſelf. They feel, perhaps, no poſitive workings of hatred towards him, unleſs when their innate corruption, like an exaſperated ſerpent, is irritated by conviction from his law; but they feel an apathy, a liſtleſſneſs, an indifferency

ferency towards him; and becauſe they feel no more, they flatter themſelves they are far from hating him; eſpecially as they may have very honourable ſpeculative thoughts of him floating on the ſurface of their minds. But alas! this very thing, this indifferency, or liſtleſs neutrality, is the very core of their enmity; and if they are thus indifferent to him now, while enjoying ſo many bleſſings from his hand, and while he delays their puniſhment, how will their enmity ſwell and riſe to all the rage of a devil againſt him, when he puts forth his vindictive hand and touches them, and ſo gives occaſion to it to diſcover its venom! My ſoul ſhudders to think what horrid inſurrections and direct rebellion this temper will produce when once irritated, and all reſtraints are taken off; which will be the doom of ſinners in the eternal world; and then they will have no more of the love of God in them than the moſt malignant devil in hell! If therefore you generally feel ſuch an indifferency towards God, be aſſured you are not reconciled to him, but are his enemies in your hearts.

Again, All moral evil, or ſin, is contrary to God; it is the only thing upon earth, or in hell, that is moſt oppoſite to his holy nature; and the object of his implacable and eternal indignation. He is of purer eyes than to behold it or endure it. It is his hatred to ſin that has turned his heart againſt any of his creatures; and is the cauſe of all the vengeance that he has inflicted upon the guilty inhabitants of our world, or the ſpirits of hell. There is no object in the whole compaſs of the univerſe ſo odious to you as every ſin is to a pure and all-holy God: now it is impoſſible you ſhould at once love two things ſo oppoſite, ſo eternally irreconcileable. As much love as you have for any unlawful pleaſure, juſt ſo much enmity there is in your hearts towards God. Hence, ſays St. Paul, *you were enemies in your minds by wicked works.* Col. i. 21. Intimating, that the love and practice of our wicked works is a plain evidence of inward enmity of mind towards

towards God. The works of the fleſh are ſinful: hence, ſays the ſame apoſtle, *the carnal mind, or the minding of the fleſh,* φρονημα σαρκος, Rom. viii. 7. *is enmity againſt God; it is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: ſo then they that are in the fleſh,* or under the power of a carnal mind, *cannot pleaſe God.* Rom. viii. 8. becauſe, whatever ſeeming acts of obedience they perform, and whatever appearances of friendſhip they put on, they are at heart enemies to God, and therefore cannot pleaſe him, who ſearches their heart, and ſees the ſecret principle of their actions. Hence alſo St. James tells us, *that if any man would be a friend to the world, he is the enemy of God, becauſe the friendſhip of the world is enmity againſt God.* Jam. iv. 4. For the world enflames the luſts of men, and occaſions much ſin; and if we love the tempter, we love the ſin to which it would allure us; and if we love the ſin, we are the enemies of God; and therefore the friendſhip of the world is enmity againſt God. This then is an eſtabliſhed maxim, without ſtraining the matter too far, that as far as you love any ſin, ſo far are you enemies to God. The love, as well as the ſervice of ſuch oppoſite maſters, is utterly inconſiſtent. Now, do not your own conſciences witneſs againſt you, that you have indulged, and ſtill do habitually indulge the love of ſome ſin or other? Whether it be covetouſneſs or ſenſual pleaſure, or ambition, or ſome angry paſſion, or whatever ſin it be, as far as you love it, ſo far you are enemies to God; and if you take a view of your temper and practice, muſt you not unavoidably be convicted of this dreadful guilt? Horrible as the crime is, is it not an undeniable matter of fact, that you do really love ſome ſin, and conſequently hate the infinitely amiable and ever bleſſed God? and therefore you are the perſons I have to deal with, as needing reconciliation with God.

Farther, Take a view of your general manner of ſerving God in the duties of religion; your manner of praying, meditation, hearing the word of God, and

and other acts of devotion, and then inquire, Do you perform this ſervice as the willing ſervants of a maſter you love? Do you not enter upon ſuch ſervice with reluctance or liſtleſſneſs, and perform it with langour and indifferency, as a buſineſs to which you have no heart? But is this your manner of performing a labour of love to a friend? Will your own reaſon ſuffer you to think you would be ſo luke-warm and heartleſs in the worſhip of God if you ſincerely loved him? No; love is an active principle, a vigorous ſpring of action; and if this were the principle of your religious ſervices, you would infuſe more ſpirit and life into them, you would exert all your powers, and be *fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.* Rom. xii. 11.

But when you have performed offices of devotion with ſome degree of earneſtneſs, which no doubt you have ſometimes done, what was the principle or ſpring of your exertion? Was it the love of God? or was it purely the low principle of ſelf-love? Why did you pray with ſuch eager importunity, and attend upon the other means of grace with ſo much ſerioufneſs, but becauſe you apprehended your dear ſelves were in danger, and you were not willing to be miſerable for ever? This ſervile, mercenary kind of religious earneſtneſs will not prove that you love God, but only that you love yourſelves; and this you may do, and yet have no more true goodneſs, or genuine love to God, than an infernal ſpirit; for there is not a ſpirit in hell but what loves himſelf. Indeed ſelf-love is ſo far from being an evidence of the love of God, that the extravagant exceſs of it is the ſource of that wickedneſs that abounds among men and devils. I do not mean by this utterly to exclude ſelf-love out of genuine religion; it muſt have its place in the moſt excellent and beſt beings, but then it muſt be kept in a proper ſubordination, and not advance the creature above the Creator, and dethrone the ſupreme King of the univerſe.—His love muſt be uppermoſt in the heart, and when that has the higheſt place, the indulgence of

ſelf-

ſelf-love in purſuing our own happineſs is lawful, and an important duty. Now, do you not find from this view of the caſe, that you are not reconciled to God, even in your moſt devout and zealous hours, much leſs in the languid inactive tenour of your lives? If ſo, place yourſelves among thoſe that I have to do with to-day; that is, the enemies of God.

So alſo, when you perform good offices to mankind; when you are harmleſs, obliging neighbours; when you are charitable to the poor, or ſtrictly juſt in trade; is the love of God, and a regard to his authority, the reaſon and principle of your actions? That is, do you do theſe things becauſe God commands them, and becauſe you delight to do what he commands? or rather, do you not do them merely becauſe it is your nature to perform humane and honourable actions in ſuch inſtances; or becauſe you may acquire honour, or ſome ſelfiſh advantage by them? Alas! that God ſhould be neglected, forgotten, and left out of the queſtion, as of no importance, even in thoſe actions that are materially good! that even what he commands ſhould be done, not becauſe he commands it, but for ſome other ſordid ſelfiſh reaſon! O! if you did really love God, would you thus diſregard him, and do nothing for his ſake; not only when you are doing what he forbids, but even when you are performing what he has made your duty! Would he be ſuch a cypher, a mere nothing in your practical eſteem, if your hearts were reconciled to him as your God? No; ſuch of you muſt look upon yourſelves as the very perſons whom I am to pray, in Chriſt's ſtead, to be reconciled to God.

I might thus, from obvious facts, lay before you many more evidences of your diſaffection to the great God; but I muſt leave ſome room for the other part of my addreſs to you, in which I am to perſuade you to accept of the propoſal of reconciliation; and therefore I ſhall add only one more teſt of your pretended friendſhip, a teſt which is eſtabliſhed by the great Founder

Founder of our religion, as infallibly deciſive in this caſe; and that is, obedience, or the keeping of the commandments of God. This, I ſay, is eſtabliſhed in the ſtrongeſt terms by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, as a deciſive teſt of love, *If you love me, keep my commandments.* John xiv. 15. *Then are ye my friends if ye do whatſoever I command you.* John xv. 14. *If any man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my ſaying.* John xiv. 23, 24. *This is the love of God,* ſays St. John, *that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.* 1 John v. 3. that is, they are not grievous when love is the principle of obedience. The ſervice of love is always willing and pleaſing. Now, my brethren, bring your hearts and lives to this ſtandard, and let conſcience declare, Are there not ſome demands and reſtraints of the divine law ſo diſagreeable to you that you labour to keep yourſelves ignorant of them, and turn every way to avoid the painful light of conviction? Are there not ſeveral duties which you know in your conſciences to be ſuch, which you do not ſo much as honeſtly endeavour to perform, but knowingly and wilfully neglect? And are there not ſome favourite ſins which your conſciences tell you God has forbidden, which yet are ſo pleaſing to you, that you knowingly and allowedly indulge and practiſe them? If this be your caſe, you need not pretend to plead any thing in your own defence, or heſitate any longer; the caſe is plain, you are, beyond all doubt, enemies to God; you are undeniably convicted of it this day by irreſiſtible evidence. You perhaps glory in the profeſſion of Chriſtians, but you are, notwithſtanding, enemies of God. You attend on public worſhip, you pray, you read, you communicate, you are perhaps a zealous churchman or diſſenter, but you are enemies of God. You have perhaps had many fits of religious affection, and ſerious concern about your everlaſting happineſs, but notwithſtanding you are enemies of God. You may have reformed in many things, but you are ſtill enemies

enemies of God. Men may eſteem you Chriſtians, but the God of Heaven accounts you his enemies. In vain do you inſiſt upon it, that you have never hated your Maker all your life, but even tremble at the thought, for undeniable facts are againſt you; and the reaſon why you have not ſeen your enmity was, becauſe you were blind, and judged upon wrong principles: but if you this day feel the force of conviction from the law, and have your eyes opened, you will ſee and be ſhocked at your horrid enmity againſt God, before yonder ſun ſets.

And now, when I have ſingled out from the reſt thoſe I am now to beſeech to reconciliation with God, have I not got the majority of you to treat with? Where are the ſincere lovers of God? Alas! how few are they! and how imperfect even in their love, ſo that they hardly dare call themſelves lovers of God, but tremble leſt they ſhould ſtill belong to the wretched crowd that are ſtill unreconciled to him!

Ye rebels againſt the King of Heaven! ye enemies againſt my Lord and Maſter Jeſus Chriſt! (I cannot flatter you with a ſofter name) hear me; attend to the propoſal I make to you, not in my own name, but in the name and ſtead of your rightful Sovereign; and that is, that you will this day be reconciled to God. "I pray you in his ſtead (that is all I can do) "be ye reconciled to God." That you may know what I mean, I will more particularly explain this overture to you.

If you would be reconciled to God, you muſt be deeply ſenſible of the guilt, the wickedneſs, the baſeneſs, the inexpreſſible malignity of your enmity and rebellion againſt him. You muſt return to your rightful Sovereign as convicted, ſelf-condemned, penitent, broken-hearted rebels, confounded and aſhamed of your conduct, loathing yourſelves becauſe you have loathed the ſupreme Excellence, mourning over your unnatural diſaffection, your baſe ingratitude, your horrid rebellion againſt ſo good a King. And what do you

ſay to this article of the treaty of peace? Is it an hard thing for ſuch cauſeleſs enemies to fall upon the knee, and to mourn and weep as proſtrate penitents at the feet of their injured Maker? Is it an hard thing for one that has all his life been guilty of the blackeſt crime upon earth, or even in hell, I mean enmity againſt God, to confeſs "I have ſinned," and to feel his own confeſſion? to feel it, I ſay; for if he does not feel it, his confeſſion is but an empty compliment, that increaſes his guilt.

Again, If you would be reconciled to God, you muſt heartily conſent to be reconciled to him in Chriſt; that is, you muſt come in upon the footing of that act of grace which is publiſhed in the goſpel through Chriſt, and expecting no favour at all upon the footing of your own goodneſs. The merit of what you call your good actions, of your repentance, your prayers, your acts of charity and juſtice, muſt all paſs for nothing in this reſpect: you muſt depend only and entirely upon the merit of Chriſt's obedience and ſufferings as the ground of your acceptance with God; and hope for forgiveneſs and favour from his mere mercy beſtowed upon you, only for the ſake of Chriſt, or on account of what he has done and ſuffered in the ſtead of ſinners. The context informs you, that it is only in Chriſt that God is reconciling the world to himſelf; and conſequently it is only in Chriſt that the world muſt accept of reconciliation and pardon. It does not conſiſt with the dignity and perfections of the King of Heaven to receive rebels into favour upon any other footing. I would have you conſent to every article of the overture as I go along; and therefore here again I make a pauſe to aſk you, what do you think of this article? Are you willing to comply with it, willing to come into favour with God, as convicted, ſelf-condemned rebels, upon an act of grace procured by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt alone? Is it a mortification to creatures that never have done one action truly good in all their lives, becauſe they have never

never loved God in one moment of their lives; creatures that have always, even in what they counted their beſt diſpoſitions, and beſt actions, been hateful to God, becauſe even in their beſt diſpoſitions and beſt actions they were utterly deſtitute of his love? Is it a mortification to ſuch creatures to renounce all their own merit, and conſent to be ſaved only through grace, on account of the righteouſneſs of another, even of Jeſus Chriſt the great peace-maker? Can it be a mortification to you to renounce what you have not, and to own yourſelves guilty, and utterly unworthy, when you are really ſuch? O! may I not expect your compliance with this term of reconciliation?

Again, If you would be reconciled to God, you muſt engage yourſelves in his ſervice for the future, and devote yourſelves to do his will. His law muſt be the rule of your temper and practice: whatever he commands, you muſt honeſtly endeavour to perform, without exception of any one duty as diſagreeable and laborious; and whatever he forbids, you muſt, for that reaſon, abſtain from, however pleaſing, advantageous, or faſhionable. You muſt no longer look upon yourſelves as your own, but as bought with a price, and therefore bound to glorify God with your ſouls and your bodies, which are his. And can you make any difficulty of complying with this term; of obeying Him, whom the happy angels in heaven obey; of obſerving that law which always unites your duty and your happineſs, and forbids nothing but what is itſelf injurious to you in the nature of things; of doing the will of the wiſeſt and beſt of beings rather than your own, who are ignorant and depraved creatures? O! can you make any difficulty of this? If not, you will return home this day reconciled to God; an happineſs you have never yet enjoyed for one moment.

Finally, If you would be reconciled to God, you muſt break off all friendſhip with his enemies; your friendſhip with the world, I mean your attachment to its wicked faſhions and cuſtoms, and your fondneſs

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for its rebellious inhabitants, who continue enemies to God; your love of guilty pleaſures, and every form of ſin, however pleaſing or gainful you might imagine it to be; your old habits and practices, while enemies to God; all theſe you muſt break off for ever; for your friendſhip with theſe is utterly inconſiſtent with the love of God. As long as you are reſolved to love the world, to keep up your ſociety with your old companions in ſin, to retain your old pleaſures and evil practices; as long, I ſay, as you are reſolved upon this courſe, farewell all hope of your reconciliation to God: it is abſolutely impoſſible. And do any of you heſitate at this article? Is ſin ſo noble a thing in itſelf, and ſo happy in its conſequences, as that you ſhould be ſo loth to part with it? Is it ſo ſweet a thing to you to ſin againſt God, that you know not how to forbear? Alas! will you rather be an implacable enemy to the God that made you, than break your league with his enemies and your own? Do you love your ſins ſo well, and are you ſo obliged to them, that you will lay down your life, your eternal life, for their ſake?

I might multiply particulars, but theſe are the principal articles of that treaty of peace I am negociating with you; and a conſent to theſe includes a compliance with all the reſt. And are you determined to comply? Does the heaven-born purpoſe now riſe in your minds, "I am determined I will be an enemy of God no longer; but this very day I will be reconciled to God upon his own terms!" Is this your fixed purpoſe? or is there any occaſion to pray and perſuade you?

I well know, and it is fit you ſhould know, that you are not able of yourſelves to conſent to theſe terms, but that it is the work of the power of God alone to reconcile you to himſelf; and that all my perſuaſions and intreaties will never make you either able or willing. You will then aſk me, perhaps, "Why do I propoſe the terms to you, or uſe any perſuaſives or intreaties

intreaties with you?" I anſwer, Becauſe you never will be ſenſible of your inability till you make an honeſt trial, and becauſe you never will look and pray for the aid of the bleſſed ſpirit till you are deeply ſenſible of your own inſufficiency: and further, becauſe, if the bleſſed ſpirit ſhould ever effectually work upon you, it will be by enlightening your underſtandings to ſee the reaſonableneſs of the terms, and the force of the perſuaſives; and in this way, agreeably to your reaſonable natures, ſweetly conſtraining your obſtinate wills to yield yourſelves to God: therefore the terms muſt be propoſed to you, and perſuaſives uſed, if I would be ſubſervient to this divine agent, and furniſh him with materials with which to work; and I have ſome little hope that he will, as it were, catch my feeble words from my lips before they vaniſh into air, and bear them home to your hearts with a power which you will not be able to reſiſt. Finally, a conviction of the true ſtate of your caſe may conſtrain you from ſelf-love and the low principles of nature to uſe the means of reconciliation with zeal and earneſtneſs: this you are capable of, even with the mere ſtrength of degenerate nature; and it is only in this way of earneſt endeavours that you have any encouragement to hope for divine aid: therefore, notwithſtanding your utter impotence, I muſt pray, intreat, and perſuade you to be reconciled to God.

I pray you, in the name of the great God your heavenly Father, and of Jeſus Chriſt your Redeemer. If God ſhould once more renew the thunder and lightning, and darkneſs and tempeſt of Sinai, and ſpeak to you as he once did to the trembling Iſraelites; or if he ſhould appear to you in all the amiable and alluring glories of a ſin-pardoning reconcileable God, and pray you to be reconciled to him, would you not then regard the propoſal? or if Jeſus, who once prayed for you from the croſs, ſhould now pray to you from his throne in heaven, and beg you with his own gracious voice to be reconciled, O! could you diſregard the intreaty?

intreaty? Surely no. Now the overture of peace is as really made to you by the bleſſed God and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, as if it were expreſsly propoſed to you by an immediate voice from heaven. For I beſeech you, *as though God did beſeech you* by me, and it is *in Chriſt's ſtead*, that I pray you *be reconciled to God*. Therefore, however lightly you may make of a mere propoſal of mine, can you diſregard an overture from the God that made you, and the Saviour that bought you with his blood; in which I am but the faint echo of their voice from heaven.

In the name of God I pray you; the name of the greateſt and beſt of beings; that name which angels love and adore, and which ſtrikes terror through the hardieſt devil in the infernal regions; the name of your Father, the immediate Father of your ſpirits, and the Author of your mortal frames; the name of your Preſerver and Benefactor, in whom you live, and move, and have your being; and who gives you life, and breath, and all things; the name of your rightful Sovereign and Lawgiver, who has a right to demand your love and obedience; the name of your ſupreme Judge, who will aſcend the tribunal, and acquit or condemn you, as he finds you friends or foes; the name of that God, rich in goodneſs, who has repleniſhed heaven with an infinite plenitude of happineſs, in which he will allow you to ſhare, after all your hoſtility and rebellion, if you conſent to the overture of reconciliation; in the name of that God of terrible majeſty and juſtice, who has prepared the dungeon of hell as a priſon for his enemies, where he holds in chains the mighty powers of darkneſs, and thouſands of your own race, who perſiſted in that enmity to him of which you are now guilty, and with whom you muſt have your everlaſting portion, if, like them, you continue hardened and incorrigible in your rebellion; in the name of that compaſſionate God, who ſent his dear Son (O the tranſporting thought!) to ſatisfy divine juſtice for you by his death, and the precepts of the

the law by his life, and thus to remove all obſtructions out of the way of your reconciliation on the part of God; in this great, this endearing and tremendous name, I pray you be reconciled to God. I pray you for his ſake; and has this name no weight with you? Will you do nothing for his ſake? what, not ſo reaſonable and advantageous a thing as dropping your unnatural rebellion, and being reconciled to him? Is your contempt of God riſen to that pitch that you will not do the moſt reaſonable and profitable thing in the world, if he intreat you to do it? Be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens! at this.

I pray you both in the name and for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, the true friend of publicans and ſinners, in his name, and for his ſake, who aſſumed your degraded nature, that he might dignify and ſave it; who lived a life of labour, poverty, and perſecution upon earth, that you might enjoy a life of everlaſting happineſs and glory in heaven; who died upon a torturing croſs, that you might ſit upon heavenly thrones; who was impriſoned in the gloomy grave, that you might enjoy a glorious reſurrection; who fell a victim to divine juſtice, that you might be ſet free from its dreadful arreſt; who felt trouble and agony of ſoul, that you might enjoy the ſmiles, the pleaſures of divine love; who, in ſhort, has diſcovered more ardent and extenſive love for you than all the friends in the world can do; in his name, and for his ſake, I pray you to be reconciled to God. And is his dear name a trifle in your eſteem? Will you not do any thing ſo reaſonable and ſo neceſſary, and conducive to your happineſs for his ſake; for his ſake who has done and ſuffered ſo much for you? Alas! has the name of Jeſus no more influence among the creatures he bought with his blood! It is hard indeed if I beg in vain, when I beg for the ſake of Chriſt, the Friend, the Saviour of periſhing ſouls.

But if you have no regard for him, you certainly have for yourſelves; therefore, for your own ſakes, for

for the ſake of your precious immortal ſouls, for the ſake of your own everlaſting happineſs, I pray you to be reconciled to God. If you refuſe, you degrade the honour of your nature, and commence incarnate devils. For what is the grand conſtituent of a devil but enmity againſt God? You become the refuſe of the creation, fit for no apartment of the univerſe but the priſon of hell. While you are unreconciled to God you can do nothing at all to pleaſe him. He that ſearches the heart knows that even your good actions do not proceed from love to him, and therefore he abhors them. Ten thouſand prayers and acts of devotion and morality, as you have no principles of real holineſs, are ſo many provocations to a righteous God. While you refuſe to be reconciled, you are acceſſary to, and patronize all the rebellion of men and devils; for if you have a right to continue in your rebellion, why may not others? why may not every man upon earth? why may not every miſerable ghoſt in the infernal regions? And are you for raiſing an univerſal mutiny and rebellion againſt the throne of the moſt High! O the inexpreſſible horror of the thought! If you refuſe to be reconciled, you will ſoon weary out the mercy and patience of God towards you, and he will come forth againſt you in all the terrors of an almighty enemy. He will give death a commiſſion to ſeize you, and drag you to his flaming tribunal. He will break off the treaty, and never make you one offer of reconciliation more: he will ſtrip you of all the enjoyments he was pleaſed to lend you, while you were under a reprieve, and the treaty was not come to a final iſſue; and will leave you nothing but bare being, and an extenſive capacity of miſery, which will be filled up to the uttermoſt from the vials of his indignation. He will treat you as his implacable enemy, and you ſhall be to him as *Amalek*, Exod. xvii. 16. with whom he will make war for ever and ever. He will reprove you, and ſet your ſins in order before you, and tear you in pieces, and there ſhall be none to

to deliver. He will meet you as a lion, "and as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of your hearts." Hoſ. xiii. 8. He hath for a long time held his peace, and endured your rebellion; but ere long he will go forth as a mighty man; he ſhall ſtir up jealouſy like a man of war; he ſhall cry, yea roar; he ſhall prevail againſt his enemies. Ah! he will eaſe him of his adverſaries, and avenge him of his enemies. He will give orders to the executioners of his juſtice: *Theſe mine enemies, that would not that I ſhould reign over them, bring them hither, and ſlay them before me.* Luke xix. 27. And now, if you will not ſubmit to peace, prepare to meet your God, O ſinners; gird up your loins like men; put on all the terror of your rage, and go forth to meet your almighty adverſary, who will ſoon meet you in the field, and try your ſtrength. Call the legions of hell to your aid, and ſtrengthen the confederacy with all your fellow-ſinners upon earth; put briers and thorns around you to incloſe from his reach. Prepare the dry ſtubble to oppoſe devouring flame. Aſſociate yourſelves, but ye ſhall be broken in pieces; gird yourſelves; but, alas! ye ſhall be broken to pieces.

But O! I muſt drop this ironical challenge, and ſeriouſly pray you to make peace with him whom you cannot reſiſt: then all your paſt rebellion will be forgiven; you ſhall be the favourites of your ſovereign, and happy for ever; and earth and heaven will rejoice at the concluſion of this bleſſed peace; and my now ſad heart will ſhare in the joy. Therefore, for your own ſakes, "I pray you to be reconciled to God."

SERMON IV.

The Nature and Univerſality of Spiritual Death.

EPHES. ii. 1. and 5. *Who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.—Even when we were dead in ſins.*

THERE is a kind of death which we all expect to feel that carries terror in the very ſound, and all its circumſtances are ſhocking to nature. The ghaſtly countenance, the convulſive agonies, the expiring groan, the coffin, the grave, the devouring worm, the ſtupor, the inſenſibility, the univerſal inactivity, theſe ſtrike a damp to the ſpirit, and we turn pale at the thought. With ſuch objects as theſe in view, courage fails, levity looks ſerious, preſumption is daſhed, the cheerful paſſions ſink, and all is ſolemn, all is melancholy. The moſt ſtupid and hardy ſinner cannot but be moved to ſee theſe things exemplified in others; and when he cannot avoid the proſpect, he is ſhocked to think that he himſelf muſt feel them.

But there is another kind of death little regarded indeed, little feared, little lamented, which is infinitely more terrible—the death, not of the body, but of the ſoul: a death which does not ſtupify the limbs, but the faculties of the mind: a death which does not ſeparate the ſoul and body, and conſign the latter to the grave, but that ſeparates the ſoul from God, excludes it from all the joys of his preſence, and delivers it over to everlaſting miſery: a tremendous death indeed! "a death unto death." The expreſſion of St. Paul is prodigiouſly ſtrong and ſtriking: θανάτου εις θάνατον, Death unto death, death after death, in a dreadful ſucceſſion, and the laſt more terrible than the firſt, 2 Cor. ii. 16. and this is the death meant in my text, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.*

To

To explain the context and ſhew you the connection, I ſhall make two ſhort remarks.

The one is, That the apoſtle had obſerved in the nineteenth and twentieth verſes of the forgoing chapter, that the ſame almighty power of God, which raiſed Chriſt from the dead, is exerted to enable a ſinner to believe—*We believe*, ſays he, *according to the working* or energy ενεργειαν *of his mighty power which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead.* The one, as well as the other, is an exploit of omnipotence. The exceeding greatneſs of his mighty power is exerted towards us that believe, as well as it was upon the dead body of Chriſt to reſtore it to life, after it had been torn and mangled upon the croſs, and lain three days and three nights in the grave. What ſtrong language is this! what a forcible illuſtration! Methinks this paſſage alone is ſufficient to confound all the vanity and ſelf-ſufficiency of mortals, and entirely deſtroy the proud fiction of a ſelf-ſprung faith produced by the efforts of degenerate nature. In my text the apoſtle aſſigns the reaſon of this. The ſame exertion of the ſame power is neceſſary in the one caſe and the other; becauſe, as the body of Chriſt was dead, and had no principle of life in it, ſo, ſays he, *ye were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*; and therefore could no more quicken yourſelves than a dead body can reſtore itſelf to life. *But God*, verſe 4th, *who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us*; that God, who raiſed the entomed Redeemer to life again, that ſame almighty God, by a like exertion of the ſame power, *hath quickened us*, verſe 5th, *even when we were dead in ſins*; dead, ſenſeleſs, inactive, and incapable of animating ourſelves. Let any man carefully read theſe verſes, and conſider their moſt natural meaning, and I cannot but think common ſenſe will direct him thus to underſtand them. The ſcriptures were written with a deſign to be underſtood; and therefore that ſenſe which is the moſt natural to a plain unprejudiced underſtanding is moſt likely to be true.

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The other remark is, That the apoſtle having pronounced the Epheſians dead in ſin, while unconverted, in the firſt verſe, paſſes the ſame ſentence upon himſelf and the whole body of the Jews, notwithſtanding their high privileges, in the fifth verſe. The ſenſe and connection may be diſcovered in the following paraphraſe: "You Epheſians were very lately Heathens, and, while you were in that ſtate, you were ſpiritually dead, and all your actions were dead works. In time paſt ye walked in treſpaſſes and ſins, nor were you ſingular in your courſe: though it be infinitely pernicious, yet it is the common courſe of this world, and it is alſo agreeable to the temper and inſtigation of that gloomy prince, who has a peculiar power in the region of the air; that malignant ſpirit who works with dreadful efficacy in the numerous children of diſobedience; but this was not the caſe of you Heathens alone: we alſo who are Jews, notwithſtanding our many religious advantages, and even I myſelf, notwithſtanding my high privileges and unblemiſhable life as a Phariſee, we alſo, I ſay, had our converſation in times paſt among the children of diſobedience; we all, as well as they, walked in the luſts of the fleſh, fulfilling the deſires and inclinations (θελήματα) of our ſenſual fleſh, and of our depraved minds; for theſe were tainted with ſpiritual wickedneſs, independent upon our animal paſſions and appetites; and we were all, even by nature, children of wrath, even as others: in this reſpect we Jews were juſt like the reſt of mankind, corrupt from our very birth, tranſgreſſors from the womb, and liable to the wrath of God. Our external relation and privileges as the peculiar people of God, diſtinguiſhed with a religion from heaven, makes no diſtinction between us and others in this matter. As we are all children of diſobedience by our lives, ſo we are all, without exception, children of wrath by nature: but when we are all dead in ſins, when Jews and Gentiles were equally dead to God, then, even then, God, who is rich in mercy, had pity upon us; *he quickened*

us;

us; "he inſpired us with a new and ſpiritual life by his own almighty power, which raiſed the dead body of Chriſt from the grave." *He quickened us together with Chriſt*: "We received our life by virtue of our union with him as our vital head, who was raiſed to an immortal life, that he might quicken dead ſouls by thoſe influences of his ſpirit, which he purchaſed by his death; and therefore by grace are ye ſaved. It is the pureſt, richeſt, freeſt grace, that ever ſuch dead ſouls as we were made alive to God, and not ſuffered to remain dead for ever."

This is the obvious meaning and connection of theſe verſes; and we now proceed to conſider the text, *Dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*; you dead, we dead, Jews and Gentiles, all *dead* together *in treſpaſſes and ſins*. A diſmal, mortifying character! "This one place," ſays Beza, "like a thunder-bolt, daſhes all mankind down to the duſt, great and proud as they are; for it pronounces their nature not only hurt but dead by ſin, and therefore liable to wrath."*

Death is a ſtate of inſenſibility and inactivity, and a dead man is incapable of reſtoring himſelf to life; therefore the condition of an unconverted ſinner muſt have ſome reſemblance to ſuch a ſtate, in order to ſupport the bold metaphor here uſed by the apoſtle. To underſtand it aright we muſt take care, on the one hand, that we do not explain it away in flattery to ourſelves, or in compliment to the pride of human nature: and, on the other hand, that we do not carry the ſimilitude too far, ſo as to lead into abſurdities, and contradict matter of fact.

The metaphor muſt be underſtood with ſeveral limitations or exceptions; for it is certain there is a wide difference between the ſpiritual death of the ſoul, and the natural death of the body, particularly in this reſpect, that death puts an entire end to all the powers, actions,

* "Hoc uno loco, quaſi fulmine, totus homo, quantus quantus eſt proſternitur. Neque enim naturam dicit læſam, ſed mortuam, per peccatum; ideoque iræ obnoxiam."

actions, and ſenſations of our animal nature univerſally, with regard to all objects of every kind: but a ſoul dead in ſin is only partially dead; that is, it is dead only with regard to a certain kind of ſenſations and exerciſes, but in the mean time it may be all life and activity about other things. It is alive, ſenſible, and vigorous about earthly objects and purſuits; theſe raiſe its paſſions and engage its thoughts. It has alſo a dreadful power and faculty of ſinning, though this is not its life but its diſeaſe, its death, like the tendency of a dead body to corruption. It can likewiſe exerciſe its intellectual powers, and make conſiderable improvements in ſcience. A ſinner dead in treſpaſſes and ſins may be a living treaſury of knowledge, an univerſal ſcholar, a profound philoſopher, and even a great divine, as far as mere ſpeculative knowledge can render him ſuch; nay, he is capable of many ſenſations and impreſſions from religious objects, and of performing all the external duties of religion. He is able to read, to hear, to pray, to meditate upon divine things; nay, he may be an inſtructor of others, and preach perhaps with extenſive popularity: he may have a form of godlineſs, and obtain a name to live among men: he is in ſome meaſure able, and it is his duty to attend upon the means God has inſtituted for quickening him with ſpiritual life, and God deals with him as with a rational creature, by laws, ſanctions, promiſes, expoſtulations, and invitations: theſe conceſſions I make, not only to give you the ſenſe of the text, but alſo to prevent the abuſe of the doctrine, and anticipate ſome objections againſt it, as though it were an encouragement to continue idle, and uſe no means to obtain ſpiritual life: or as though it rendered all the means of grace needleſs and abſurd, like arguments to the dead, to reſtore themſelves to life. But, notwithſtanding all theſe conceſſions, it is a melancholy truth that an unregenerate ſinner is dead. Though he can commit ſin with greedineſs, though he is capable of animal actions and ſecular purſuits, nay, though

though he can employ his mind even about intellectual and ſpiritual things, and is capable of performing the external duties of religion, yet there is ſomething in religion with regard to which he is entirely dead: there is a kind of ſpiritual life of which he is entirely deſtitute: he is habitually inſenſible with regard to things divine and eternal: he has no activity, no vigour in the pure, ſpiritual, and vital exerciſes of religion: he has no pravailing bent of mind towards them: he has not thoſe views and apprehenſions of things which a ſoul ſpiritually alive would neceſſarily receive and entertain: he is deſtitute of thoſe ſacred affections, that joy, that love, that deſire, that hope, that fear, that ſorrow, which are, as it were, the innate paſſions of the new man. In ſhort, he is ſo inactive, ſo liſtleſs, ſo inſenſible in theſe reſpects, that death, which puts an end to all action and ſenſation, is a proper emblem of his ſtate; and this is the meaning of the apoſtle in my text. He is alſo utterly unable to quicken himſelf. He may indeed uſe means in ſome ſort; but to implant a vital principle in his ſoul, but to give himſelf vivid ſenſations of divine things, and make himſelf alive towards God, this is entirely beyond his utmoſt ability: this is as peculiarly the work of almighty power as the reſurrection of a dead body from the grave. As to this death it is brought upon him by and conſiſts in *treſpaſſes and ſins*. The innate depravity and corruption of the heart, and the habits of ſin contracted and confirmed by repeated indulgences of inbred corruption, theſe are the poiſonous, deadly things that have ſlain the ſoul; theſe have entirely indiſpoſed and diſabled it for living religion. *Treſpaſſes and ſins* are the grave, the corrupt effluvia, the malignant damps, the rottenneſs of a dead ſoul: it lies dead, ſenſeleſs, inactive, buried *in treſpaſſes and ſins*. *Treſpaſſes and ſins* render it ghaſtly, odious, abominable, a noiſome putrefaction before an holy God, like a rotten carcaſs, or a mere maſs of corruption: the vileſt luſts, like worms, riot upon and devour

devour it, but it feels them not, nor can it lift a hand to drive the venom off. Such mortifying ideas as theſe may be contained in the ſtriking metaphor, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*; and I hope you now underſtand its general meaning.

If you would know what has turned my thoughts to this ſubject, I will candidly tell you, though with a ſorrowful heart. I am ſure, if any objects within the compaſs of human knowledge have a tendency to make the deepeſt impreſſions upon our minds, they are thoſe things which chriſtianity teaches us concerning God, concerning ourſelves, and a future ſtate; and if there be any exerciſes which ſhould call forth all the life and powers of our ſouls into action, they are thoſe of a religious nature: but, alas! I often find a ſtrange, aſtoniſhing ſtupor and liftleſſneſs about theſe things. In this I am not ſingular; the beſt among us complain of the ſame thing; the moſt lively Chriſtians feel this unaccountable langour and inſenſibility; and the generality are evidently deſtitute of all habitual concern about them: they are all alive in the purſuit of pleaſure, riches, or honours; their thoughts are eaſily engaged, and their affections raiſed by ſuch things as theſe: but the concerns of religion, which, above all other things are adapted to make impreſſions upon them, and ſtir up all the life within them, ſeem to have little or no effect. When I have made this obſervation with reſpect to others, and felt the melancholy confirmation of it in my own breaſt, I have really been ſtruck with amazement, and ready to cry out, "Lord, what is this that has befallen me, and the reſt of my fellow mortals? what can be the cauſe of ſuch a conduct in a rational nature, to be active and eager about trifles, and ſtupid and careleſs about matters of infinite importance? O whence is this ſtrange infatuation!" Thus I have been ſhocked at this aſtoniſhing fact, and I could account for it in no other way but by reflecting that we have all been *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*.—In ſuch a ſolemn hour the apoſtle's expreſ-

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ſion does not ſeem at all too ſtrong. I have no ſcruple at all to pronounce, not only from the authority of an apoſtle, but from the evidence of the thing, that I, and all around me, yea, and all the ſons of men have been dead; in the ſpiritual ſenſe, utterly dead. Multitudes among us, yea, the generality are dead ſtill; hence the ſtillneſs about religion among us; hence the ſtupor, the careleſſneſs about eternal things, the thoughtleſs neglect of God, the inſenſibility under his providential diſpenſations, the impenitence, the preſumption that ſo much prevail. God has indeed, out of the great love wherewith he loved us, quickened ſome of us, even when we were dead in ſins; and we have a little life, ſome vital ſenſations and impreſſions at times, but O! how little, how ſuperficial, how much of a deadly ſtupor yet remains! how little life in prayer, in hearing, or in the neareſt approach to the living God! The reflection is ſhocking, but, alas! it is too true; conſult your own hearts and you will find it even ſo. Animal life ſeems to be a gradual thing; it gradually grows in an infant, it is perfect in mature age, and in old age it gradually decays, till all is gone; but how ſmall is the degree of life when the fœtus is juſt animated, or the infant born into the world! but little ſuperior to that of a plant or an oyſter. What faint ſenſations, what obſcure and languid perceptions, what feeble motions! Such are the children of grace in the preſent ſtate. Spiritual life is gradual; it is infuſed in regeneration; but O! how far from perfection while on this ſide heaven! Alas! the beſt of us are like the poor traveller that fell among thieves, and was left half dead: however, it is an unſpeakable mercy to have the leaſt principle of ſpiritual life; and we ſhould prize it more than crowns and empires.

If you would know my deſign in chooſing this ſubject, it is partly for the conviction of ſinners, that they may be alarmed with their deplorable condition, which is the firſt ſtep towards their being quickened;

partly to rouſe the children of grace to ſeek more life from their vital head; and partly to diſplay the rich grace of God in quickening ſuch dead ſinners, and beſtowing upon them a ſpiritual and immortal life; and ſurely nothing can inflame our gratitude and raiſe our wonder more than the conſideration that we were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins! If I may but anſwer theſe ends, it will be an unſpeakable bleſſing to us all. And O that divine grace may honour this humble attempt of a poor creature, at beſt but half alive, with ſucceſs! I hope, my brethren, you will hear ſeriouſly, for it is really a moſt ſerious ſubject.

You have ſeen that the metaphorical expreſſion in my text is intended to repreſent the ſtupidity, inactivity, and impotence of unregenerate ſinners about divine things. This truth I might confirm by argument and ſcripture-authority; but I think it may be a better method for popular conviction to prove and illuſtrate it from plain inſtances of the temper and conduct of ſinners about the concerns of religion, as this may force the conviction upon them from undoubted matters of fact and their own experience. This, therefore, is the method I intend to purſue; and my time will allow me to particularize only the following inſtances.

I. Conſider the excellency of the divine Being, the ſum total, the great original of all perfections. How infinitely worthy is he of the adoration of all his creatures! how deſerving of their moſt intenſe thoughts and moſt ardent affections! If majeſty and glory can ſtrike us with awe and veneration, does not Jehovah demand them, who is clothed with majeſty and glory as with a garment, and before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as graſs-hoppers, as nothing, as leſs than nothing, and vanity? If wiſdom excites our pleaſing wonder, here is an unfathomable depth. O the depth of the riches of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! If goodneſs, grace, and mercy attract our love and gratitude, here theſe amiable perfections ſhine in

in their moſt alluring glories. If juſtice ſtrikes a damp to the guilty, here is juſtice in all its tremendous majeſty. If veracity, if candour, if any, or all of the moral virtues engage our eſteem, here they all center in their higheſt perfection. If the preſence of a king ſtrikes a reverence; if the eye of his judge awes the criminal, and reſtrains him from offending, certainly we ſhould fear before the Lord all the day, for we are ſurrounded with his omnipreſence, and he is the Inſpector and Judge of all our thoughts and actions. If riches excite deſire, here are unſearchable riches: if happineſs has charms that draw all the world after it, here is an unbounded ocean of happineſs; here is the only complete portion for an immortal mind. Men are affected with theſe things in one another, though found in a very imperfect degree. Power awes and commands; virtue and goodneſs pleaſe; beauty charms; juſtice ſtrikes with ſolemnity and terror; a bright genius is admired; a benevolent merciful temper is loved: thus men are affected with created excellencies. Whence is it then they are ſo ſtupidly unaffected with the ſupreme original excellencies of Jehovah? Here, my brethren, turn your eyes inward upon yourſelves, and enquire, are not ſeveral of you conſcious that, though you have paſſions for ſuch objects as theſe, and you are eaſily moved by them, yet, with regard to the perfections of the ſupreme and beſt of beings, your hearts are habitually ſenſeleſs and unaffected. It is not an eaſy thing to make impreſſions upon you by them; and what increaſes the wonder, and aggravates your guilt, is, that you are thus ſenſeleſs and unaffected, when you believe and profeſs that theſe perfections are really in God, and that in the higheſt degree poſſible. In other caſes you can love what appears amiable, you revere what is great and majeſtic, you eagerly deſire and purſue what is valuable, and tends to your happineſs; and all this you do freely, ſpontaneouſly, vigorouſly, by the innate inclination and tendency of your nature, without reluctance, without compulſion, nay,

nay, without perſuaſion; but as to God and all his perfections, you are ſtrangely inſenſible, backward, and averſe. Where is there one being that has any confeſſed excellency in the compaſs of human knowledge, that does not engage more of the thoughts and affections of mankind than the glorious and ever bleſſed God? The ſun, moon, and ſtars, have had more worſhippers than the uncreated fountain of light from which they derive their luſtre. Kings, and miniſters of ſtate, have more punctual homage and frequent applications made to them than the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Created enjoyments are more eagerly purſued than the ſupreme Good. Search all the world over, and you will find but very little motions of heart towards God; little love, little deſire, little ſearching after him. You will often, indeed, ſee him honoured with the compliment of a bended knee, and a few heartleſs words, under the name of a prayer; but where is the heart, or where are the thoughts, where the affections? Theſe run wild through the world, and are ſcattered among a thouſand other objects. The heart has no prevailing tendency toward God, the thoughts are ſhy of him, the affections have no innate propenſity to him. In ſhort, in this reſpect the whole man is out of order: here he does not at all act like himſelf; here are no affectionate thoughts, no delightful meditations, no ardent deſires, no eager purſuits and vigorous endeavours, but all is liſtleſs, ſtupid, indiſpoſed, inactive, and averſe; and what is the matter?—"Lord! what is this that has ſeized the ſouls of thine own offspring, that they are thus utterly diſordered towards thee!" The reaſon is, they are dead, *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*. It is impoſſible a living ſoul ſhould be ſo ſtupid and unaffected with ſuch an object: it muſt be a dead ſoul that has no feeling. Yes, ſinners, this is the melancholy reaſon why you are ſo thoughtleſs, ſo unconcerned, ſo ſenſeleſs about the God that made you; you are dead. And what is the reaſon that you who have been begotten again to

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a ſpiritual life, and who are united to Chriſt as your vital head, what is the reaſon that you ſo often feel ſuch languiſhments; that the pulſe of ſpiritual life beats ſo faint and irregular, and that its motions are ſo feeble and ſlow? All this you feel and lament, but how comes it to paſs? what can be the cauſe that you who have indeed taſted that the Lord is gracious, and are ſenſible that he is all-glorious and lovely, and your only happineſs? O! what can be the cauſe, that you, of all men in the world, ſhould be ſo little engaged to him? Alas! the cauſe is, you have been dead, and the deadly ſtupor has not yet left you: you have (bleſſed be the quickening ſpirit of Chriſt!) you have received a little life; but, alas! it is a feeble ſpark; it finds the principles of death ſtill ſtrong in your conſtitution; theſe it muſt ſtruggle with, and by them it is often borne down, ſuppreſſed, and juſt expiring. Walk humbly, then, and remember your ſhame, that you were once dead, and children of wrath, even as others. The careleſſneſs and indiſpoſition of the ſoul towards the ſupreme excellence will appear yet more evident and aſtoniſhing, if we conſider,

II. The auguſt and endearing relations the great and bleſſed God ſuſtains to us, and the many ways he has taken to make dutiful and grateful impreſſions upon our hearts. What tender endearments are there contained in the relation of a Father! This he bears to us: *he made us, and not we ourſelves.* Our bodies indeed are produced in a ſucceſſion from Adam by generation, but who was it that began the ſeries? It was the Almighty, who formed the firſt man of the duſt: it was he who firſt put the ſucceſſion of cauſes in motion; and therefore he is the grand original cauſe, and the whole chain depends upon him. Who was it that firſt eſtabliſhed the laws of generation, and ſtill continues them in force? It is the all-creating Parent of nature; and without him men would have been no more able to produce one another than ſtones or clods of earth. As to our ſouls, the principal part of our perſons,

perſons, God is their immediate author, without the leaſt concurrence of ſecondary cauſes. Hence he is called the Father of your ſpirits in a peculiar ſenſe, *Heb.* xii. 9. and he aſſumes the endearing name of "the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh." *Numb.* xvi. 22. Now the name of a father is wont to carry ſome endearment and authority. Children, eſpecially in their young and helpleſs years, are fond of their father; their little hearts beat with a thouſand grateful paſſions towards him; they love to be dandled on his knees, and fondled in his arms: and they fly to him upon every appearance of danger; but if God be a father, where is his honour? here, alas! the filial paſſions are ſenſeleſs and immoveable. It is but a little time ſince we came from his creating hand, and yet we have forgotten him. It ſeems unnatural for his own offspring to enquire "where is God my Maker?" They ſhew no fondneſs for him, no affectionate veneration, and no humble confidence; their hearts are dead towards him, as though there were no ſuch being, or no ſuch near relation ſubſiſting between them. In childhood a rattle, or a ſtraw, or any trifle, is more thought of than their heavenly Father: in riper years their vain pleaſures and ſecular purſuits command more of their affections than their divine original and only happineſs.

Compare your natural temper towards your heavenly Father, and towards your earthly parents, and how wide is the difference! Nature works ſtrong in your hearts towards them, but towards him all the filial paſſions are dull and dead; and why? alas! the reaſon is, you *are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.* But this relation of a Father is not the only relation our God ſuſtains to you; he is your ſupreme King, to whom you owe allegiance; your Lawgiver, whoſe will is the rule of your conduct; and your Judge, who will call you to an account, and reward or puniſh you according to your works; but how unnatural is it to men to revere the moſt high God under theſe auguſt characters!

ters! Where is there a king upon earth, however weak or tyrannical, but is more regarded by his ſubjects than the King of heaven by the generality of men? Wherever ſuch excellent laws contemned and violated? Did ever criminals treat their judge with ſo much neglect and contempt? And are theſe ſouls alive to God who thus treat him? No. Alas! "they are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins;" however lively they are towards other things, yet in this reſpect they are ſeized with a deadly ſtupor. God is alſo our Guardian and Deliverer; and from how many dangers has he preſerved us! from how many calamities has he delivered us! Dangers, diſtreſſes, and deaths crowd upon us, and ſurround us in every age and every place: the air, the earth, the ſea, and every element are pregnant with numberleſs principles of pain and death ready to ſeize and deſtroy us: ſickneſs and death ſwarm around us: nay, they lie in ambuſh in our own conſtitution, and are perpetually undermining our lives, and yet our divine Guardian preſerves us for months and years unhurt, untouched; or, if he ſuffers the calamity to fall, or death to threaten, he flies to our deliverance; and how many ſalvations of this kind has he wrought for us; ſalvations from accidents, from ſickneſſes, from pain, from ſorrows, from death; ſalvations for our perſons and our poſſeſſions, for ourſelves, and for our friends and relations; ſalvations from dangers ſeen and unſeen; ſalvations in infancy, in youth, and in maturer years! Theſe things we cannot deny without the moſt ſtupid ignorance, and an atheiſtical diſbelief of divine Providence. Now, ſuch repeated, ſuch long-continued, ſuch unmerited favours as theſe would not paſs for nothing between man and man. We have hearts to feel ſuch obligations; nay, the ten thouſandth, the millionth part of ſuch gracious care and goodneſs would be gratefully reſented, and thankfully acknowledged. Indeed it is impoſſible we ſhould receive even this ſmall, this very ſmall proportion of favours from men in compariſon of what we receive from God;

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and even when they are the inſtruments of our deliverance, he is the original Author. But after all, is there a natural aptitude in the hearts of men to think of their gracious Guardian and Saviour? Does the principle of gratitude naturally lead them to love him, and to make thankful acknowledgments to him? Alas! no. They may indeed feel ſome tranſient, ſuperficial workings of gratitude when under the freſh ſenſe of ſome remarkable deliverance; but theſe impreſſions ſoon wear off, and they become as thoughtleſs and ſtupid as ever. But let a man, like yourſelves, ſave you from ſome great diſtreſs, you will always gratefully remember him, think of him often with pleaſure, and take all opportunities of returning his kindneſs, eſpecially if your deliverer was much your ſuperior, and independent upon you, if you had forfeited his favour, provoked him, and incurred his diſpleaſure: great favours from ſuch an one would make impreſſions upon the moſt obdurate heart.

But though God be infinitely ſuperior to us, and it is nothing to him what becomes of us, though we have rebelled againſt him, and deſerve his vengeance, yet ten thouſand deliverances from his hands have little or no effect upon the hearts of men: all theſe cannot bring them to think of him, or love him as much as they do a friend, or a common benefactor of their own ſpecies: and does ſuch ſtupid ingratitude diſcover any ſpiritual life in them? No: they are dead in this reſpect, though they are all alive to thoſe paſſions that terminate upon created objects. Farther, God is the *Benefactor* of mankind, not only in delivering them from dangers and calamities, but in beſtowing unnumbered poſitive bleſſings upon them. Here I cannot pretend to be particular, for the liſt of bleſſings is endleſs; and it will be the happy employment of an eternity to recollect and enumerate them. What an extenſive and well furniſhed world has our God formed for our accommodation! For us he has enriched the ſun with light and heat, and the earth with fruitfulneſs.

fulneſs. The numerous inhabitants of every element; the plants, minerals, and beaſts of the earth, the fiſhes of the ſea, the fowls of the air, are all rendering their ſervice to man; ſome afford him food, and others work for him: the winds and ſeas, fire and water, ſtones and trees, all conſpire to be uſeful to him. Our divine Benefactor crowns us with the bleſſings of liberty, of ſociety, of friendſhip, and the moſt endearing relations: he preſerves our health, gives us "rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, and fills our hearts with food and gladneſs." In ſhort, he gives us life, and breath, and all things; every day, every hour, every moment has arrived to us richly freighted with bleſſings; bleſſings have reſided with us at home, and attended us abroad; bleſſings preſented themſelves ready for our enjoyment as ſoon as we entered into the world; then God provided hands to receive us, knees to ſupport us, breaſts to ſuckle us, and parents to guard and cheriſh us; bleſſings have grown up with us, and given ſuch conſtant attendance, that they are become familiar to us, and are the inſeparable companions of our lives. It is no new or uſeful thing to us to ſee an illuſtrious ſun riſing to give us the day, to enjoy repoſe in the night, to riſe refreſhed and vigorous in the morning, to ſee our tables ſpread with plenty, the trees covered with fruit, the fields with grain, and various forms of animals growing up for our ſupport or ſervice. Theſe are ſuch familiar bleſſings to us, that they too often ſeem things of courſe, or neceſſary appendages of our being. What a crowd of bleſſings have crowned the preſent morning! You and yours are alive and well, you have not come hither ghaſtly and pining with hunger, or agonizing with pain. How many refreſhing draughts of air have you drawn this morning! how many ſprightly and regular pulſes have beat through your frame! how many eaſy motions have you performed with hands, feet, eyes, tongue, and other members of your body! and are not all theſe favours from God? Yes, undoubtedly;

and thus has he gone on bleſſing you all your days, without any interruption at all in many of theſe particulars of kindneſs, and with but very little in the reſt. Sinful and miſerable as this world is, it is a treaſury rich in bleſſings, a ſtore-houſe full of proviſions, a dwelling well furniſhed for the accommodation of mortals, and all by the care, and at the expence of that gracious God who firſt made and ſtill preſerves it what it is. "Lord, whence is it then that the inhabitants forget and neglect thee, as though they were not at all obliged to thee? O! whence is it that they love thy gifts, and yet diſregard the Giver; that they think leſs of thee than of an earthly father or friend, or an human benefactor; that there ſhould be ſo little gratitude towards thee, that of all benefactors thou ſhouldeſt be the leaſt acknowledged; that the benefactors of nations, and even of private perſons, in inſtances unworthy to be mentioned with thoſe of thy goodneſs, ſhould be celebrated, and even adored, while thou art neglected, thine agency overlooked, and thy goodneſs forgotten? O! whence is this ſtrange phænomenon, this unaccountable, unprecedented ſtupidity and ingratitude in reaſonable creatures? Surely, if they had any life, any ſenſation in this reſpect, they would not be capable of ſuch a conduct; but they are dead, dead to all the generous ſenſations of gratitude to God: and as a dead corpſe feels no gratitude to thoſe that perform the laſt friendly office, and cover it with earth, ſo a dead ſoul ſtands unmoved under all the profuſion of bleſſings which Heaven pours upon it.

The bleſſings I have mentioned, which are confined to the preſent ſtate, are great, and deſerve our wonder and thankſgiving, eſpecially conſidering that they are beſtowed upon a race of rebellious, ungrateful creatures, who deſerve the ſevereſt vengeance; but there is a ſet of bleſſings yet unmentioned, of infinitely greater importance, in which all others are ſwallowed up, by the glory of which they are obſcured, like the

the ſtars of night by the riſing ſun. To ſome of our race God has given crowns and kingdoms. For Iſrael Jehovah wrought the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles; ſeas and rivers opened to make way for them; rocks burſt into ſprings of water to quench their thirſt; the clouds poured down manna, and fed them with bread from heaven: their God delivered Daniel from the jaws of hungry lions, and his three companions from the burning fiery furnace. He has reſtored health to the ſick, ſight to the blind, and life to the dead. Theſe bleſſings and deliverances have ſomething majeſtic and ſtriking in them; and had we been the ſubjects of them, we could not but have regarded them as great and ſingular; but what are theſe in compariſon of God's gift of his Son, and the bleſſings he has purchaſed! his Son, who is of greater value, and dearer to him than ten thouſand worlds; his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleaſed; him has he given for us, given up to three and thirty years of the moſt mortifying abaſement, and an inceſſant conflict with the ſevereſt trials; given up to death, and all the ignominy and agonies of crucifixion. Thus has God loved our world! and never was there ſuch a diſplay of love in heaven or on earth. You can no more find love equal to this among creatures, than you can find among them the infinite power that formed the univerſe out of nothing. This will ſtand upon record to all eternity, as the unprecedented, unparalleled, inimitable love of God. And it appears the more illuſtrious when we conſider that this unſpeakable gift was given to ſinners, to rebels, to enemies, that were ſo far from deſerving it, that, on the other hand, it is a miracle of mercy that they are not all groaning for ever under the tremendous weight of his juſtice. O that I could ſay ſomething becoming this love; ſomething that might do honour to it! but, alas! the language of mortals was formed for lower ſubjects. This love paſſes all deſcription and all knowledge. Conſider alſo what rich bleſſings Chriſt has purchaſed for

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us: purchaſed not with ſuch corruptible things as ſilver and gold, but with his own precious blood: the price recommends and endears the bleſſings, though they are ſo great in themſelves as to need no ſuch recommendation. What can be greater or more ſuitable bleſſings to perſons in our circumſtances, than pardon for the guilty, redemption for ſlaves, righteouſneſs and juſtification for the condemned, ſanctification for the unholy, reſt for the weary, comfort for mourners, the favour of God for rebels and exiles, ſtrength for the impotent, protection for the helpleſs, everlaſting happineſs for the heirs of hell! and, to ſum up all, grace and glory, and every good thing, and all the unſearchable riches of Chriſt for the wretched and miſerable, the poor, the blind, and naked! Theſe are bleſſings indeed, and, in compariſon of them, all the riches of the world are impoveriſhed, and vaniſh to nothing; and all theſe bleſſings are publiſhed, offered freely, indefinitely offered to you, to me, to the greateſt ſinner on earth, in the goſpel; and we are allowed,—allowed did I ſay? we are invited with the utmoſt importunity, intreated with the moſt compaſſionate tenderneſs and condeſcenſion, and commanded by the higheſt authority, upon pain of eternal damnation, to accept the bleſſings preſented to us! And what reception does all this love meet with in our world! I tremble to think of it. It is plain, theſe things are propoſed to a world dead in ſin; for they are all ſtill, all unmoved, all ſenſeleſs under ſuch a revelation of infinite grace; mankind know not what it is to be moved, melted, tranſported with the love of a crucified Saviour, till divine grace viſits their hearts, and forms them into new creatures: they feel no eager ſolicitude, nay, not ſo much as a willingneſs to receive theſe bleſſings, till they become willing by almighty power: and judge ye, my brethren, whether they are not dead ſouls that are proof even againſt the love of God in Chriſt, that are not moved and melted by the agonies of his croſs, that are careleſs about ſuch ineſtimable

timable bleſſings as theſe? Has that ſoul any ſpiritual life in it that can ſit ſenſeleſs under the croſs of Jeſus, that can forget him, neglect him, diſhonour him, after all his love and all his ſufferings; that feels a prevailing indifferency and langour towards him; that loves him leſs than an earthly friend, and ſeeks him with leſs eagerneſs than gold and ſilver? Is not every generous paſſion, every principle of gratitude quite extinct in ſuch a ſpirit? It may be alive to other objects, but towards this it is dead; and alas! is not this the common caſe! O look round the world, and what do you ſee but a general neglect of the bleſſed Jeſus, and all the bleſſings of his goſpel? How cold, how untoward, how reluctant, how averſe are the hearts of men towards him? how hard to perſuade them to think of him and love him? Try to perſuade men to give over their ſins which grieve him, diſhonour him, and were the cauſe of his death; try to engage them to devote themſelves entirely to him, and live to his glory, alas! you try in vain; their hearts ſtill continue cold and hard as a ſtone; try to perſuade them to murder or robbery, and you are more likely to prevail. Suffer me, in my aſtoniſhment, to repeat this moſt melancholy truth again; the generality of mankind are habitually careleſs about the bleſſed Jeſus; they will not ſeek him, nor give him their hearts and affections, though they muſt periſh for ever by their neglect of him! Aſtoniſhing, and moſt lamentable, that ever ſuch perverſeneſs and ſtupidity ſhould ſeize the ſoul of man! Methinks I could here take up a lamentation over human nature, and fall on my knees with this prayer for my fellow-men, "Father of ſpirits, and Lord of life, quicken, O quicken theſe dead ſouls!" O, Sirs, while we ſee death all around us, and feel it benumbing our own ſouls, who can help the moſt bitter wailing and lamentation! who can reſtrain himſelf from crying to the great Author of life for a happy reſurrection! While the valley of dry bones lies before me, while the carnage,

nage, the charnel-houſe of immortal ſouls ſtrikes my ſight all around me far and wide, how can I forbear crying, *Come from the four winds, O breath; breathe upon theſe ſlain, that they may live?* But to turn from this digreſſion, into which I was unavoidably hurried by the horror of the ſubject, I would obſerve farther, that kind uſage and pleaſing treatment may not be always beſt for ſuch creatures as we are: fatherly ſeverities and chaſtiſements, though not agreeable to us, yet may be neceſſary and conducive to our greateſt good. Accordingly, God has tried the force of chaſtiſements to make impreſſions on our hearts: theſe indeed have been but few in compariſon of his more agreeable diſpenſations; yet recollect whether you have not frequently felt his rod. Have you not languiſhed under ſickneſs and pain, and been brought within a near view of the king of terrors? Have you not ſuffered the bereavement of friends and relations, and met with loſſes, adverſity, and diſappointments? Others have felt ſtill greater calamities in a cloſer ſucceſſion, and with fewer mercies intermixed. Theſe things, one would think, would immediately bring men to regard the hand that ſmites them, and make them ſenſible of their undutiful conduct, which has procured the correction: theſe are like the application of fire to one in a lethargy, to awaken him to life; but alas! under all theſe afflictions, the ſtupor and inſenſibility ſtill remain. Sinners groan by reaſon of oppreſſion, but it is not natural for them to inquire, *Where is God my Maker, that giveth ſongs in the night?* It is not natural for them to repent of their undutiful conduct and amend; or, if they are awakened to ſome little ſenſe, while the painful rod of the Almighty is yet upon them, as ſoon as it is removed they become as hardened and ſenſeleſs as ever. And is not a ſtate of death a very proper repreſentation of ſuch ſullen, incorrigible ſtupidity? Living ſouls have very tender ſenſations; one touch of their heavenly Father's hand makes deep impreſſions upon them; they tremble at his

his frown, they fall and weep at his feet, they confeſs their offences, and mourn over them; they fly to the arms of mercy to eſcape the impending blow; and thus would all do were they not quite deſtitute of ſpiritual life.

I have materials ſufficient for a diſcourſe of ſome hours; but at preſent I muſt abruptly drop the ſubject: however, I cannot diſmiſs you without making a few reflections. And,

1. What a ſtrange affecting view does this ſubject give us of this aſſembly! I doubt not but I may accommodate the text to ſome of you with this agreeable addition, "You hath he quickened, though you were once dead in treſpaſſes and ſins." Though the vital pulſe beats faint and irregular, and your ſpiritual life is but very low, yet, bleſſed be God, you are not entirely dead: you have ſome living ſenſations, ſome lively and vigorous exerciſes in religion. On the other hand, I doubt not but ſome of you not only were, but ſtill are *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.* It is not to be expected in our world, at leaſt not before the millennium, that we ſhall ſee ſuch a mixed company together, and all living ſouls. Here then is the difference between you; ſome of you are ſpiritually alive, and ſome of you are ſpiritually dead: here the living and the dead are blended together in the ſame aſſembly, on the ſame ſeat, and united in the neareſt relations: here ſits a dead ſoul, there another, and there another, and a few living ſouls are ſcattered here and there among them: here is a dead parent and a living child, or a dead child and a living parent: here life and death (O ſhocking!) are united in the bonds of conjugal love, and dwell under the ſame roof: here is a dead ſervant and a living maſter; and there a dead maſter (O terrible!) commands a living ſervant. Should I trace the diſtinction beyond this aſſembly into the world, we ſhall find a family here and there that have a little life; perhaps one, perhaps two, diſcover ſome vital ſymptoms; but O what crowds of dead families! all dead together,

together, and no endeavours uſed to bring one another to life; a death-like ſilence about eternal things; a deadly ſtupor and inſenſibility reign among them; they breathe out no deſires and prayers after God, nor does the vital pulſe of love beat in their hearts towards him; but, on the contrary, their ſouls are putrifying in ſin, which is very emphatically called *corruption* by the ſacred writers; they are over-run and devoured by their luſts, as worms inſult and deſtroy the dead body. Call to them, they will not awake; thunder the terrors of the Lord in their ears, they will not hear; offer them all the bleſſings of the goſpel, they will not ſtretch out the hand of faith to receive them: lay the word of God, the bread of life, before them, they have no appetite for it. In ſhort, the plain ſymptoms of death are upon them: the animal is alive, but alas! the ſpirit is dead towards God. And what an affecting, melancholy view does this give of this aſſembly, and of the world in general! *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the ſlain of the daughter of my people!* Weep not for the afflicted, weep not over ghaſtly corpſes diſſolving into their original duſt, but O! weep for dead ſouls. Should God now ſtrike all thoſe perſons dead in this aſſembly whoſe ſouls are *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*, ſhould he lay them all in pale corpſes before us, like Ananias and Sapphira at the apoſtle's feet, what numbers of you would never return from this houſe more, and what lamentations would there be among the ſurviving few! One would loſe a huſband or a wife, another a ſon or a daughter, another a father or a mother; and alas! would not ſome whole families be ſwept off together, all blended in one promiſcuous death! Such a ſight as this would ſtrike terror into the hardieſt heart among you. But what is this to a company of rational ſpirits ſlain and dead in treſpaſſes and ſins? How deplorable and inexpreſſibly melancholy a ſight this! Therefore,

2. *Awake*

2. *Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, that Chriſt may give thee light.* This call is directed to you dead ſinners; which is a ſufficient warrant for me to exhort and perſuade you. The principle of reaſon is ſtill alive in you; you are alſo ſenſible of your own intereſt, and feel the workings of ſelf-love. It is God alone that can quicken you, but he effects this by a power that does not exclude, but attends rational inſtructions and perſuaſions to your underſtanding. Therefore, though I am ſure you will continue dead ſtill if left to yourſelves, yet with ſome trembling hopes that his power may accompany my feeble words, and impregnate them with life, I call upon, I intreat, I charge you ſinners to rouſe yourſelves out of your dead ſleep, and ſeek to obtain ſpiritual life. Now, while my voice ſounds in your ears, now, this moment, waft up this prayer, "Lord, pity a dead ſoul, a ſoul that has been dead for ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, or more, and lain corrupting in ſin, and ſay unto me, "Live: from this moment let me live unto thee." Let this prayer be ſtill upon your hearts: keep your ſouls always in a ſupplicating poſture, and who knows but that he, who raiſed Lazarus from the grave, may give you a ſpiritual reſurrection to a more important life? But if you wilfully continue your ſecurity, expect in a little time to ſuffer the ſecond death; the mortification will become incurable; and then, though you will be ſtill dead to God, yet you will be "tremblingly alive all over" to the ſenſations of pain and torture. O that I could gain but this one requeſt of you, which your own intereſt ſo ſtrongly enforces! but alas! it has been ſo often refuſed, that to expect to prevail is to hope againſt hope.

3. Let the children of God be ſenſible of their great happineſs in being made ſpiritually alive. Life is a principle, a capacity neceſſary for enjoyments of any kind. Without animal life you would be as incapable of animal pleaſures as a ſtone or a clod; and without ſpiritual life you can no more enjoy the hap-

pineſs of heaven than a beaſt or a devil. This therefore is a preparative, a previous qualification, and a ſure pledge and earneſt of everlaſting life. How highly then are you diſtinguiſhed, and what cauſe have you for gratitude and praiſe!

4. Let us all be ſenſible of this important truth, that it is entirely by grace we are ſaved. This is the inference the apoſtle expreſsly makes from this doctrine; and he is ſo full of it, that he throws it into a parentheſis (verſe the 5th) though it breaks the connection of his diſcourſe; and as ſoon as he has room he reſumes it again (verſe 8th) and repeats it over and over, in various forms, in the compaſs of a few verſes. *By grace ye are ſaved.—By grace are you ſaved through faith.—It is the gift of God;—not of yourſelves,—not of works* (verſe 9th.) This, you ſee, is an inference that ſeemed of great importance to the apoſtle; and what can more naturally follow from the premiſes? If we were once dead in ſin, certainly it is owing to the freeſt grace that we have been quickened; therefore, when we ſurvey the change, let us cry, "Grace, grace unto it."

SERMON V.

The Nature and Proceſs of Spiritual Life.

EPHES. ii. 4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt.*

IT is not my uſual method to weary your attention by a long confinement to one ſubject; and our religion furniſhes us with ſuch a boundleſs variety of important topics, that a miniſter who makes them his ſtudy will find no temptation to cloy you with repetitions, but rather finds it difficult to ſpeak ſo conciſely

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on one ſubject, as to leave room for others of equal importance: however the ſubject of my laſt diſcourſe was ſo copious and intereſting, that I cannot diſmiſs it without a ſupplement. I there ſhewed you ſome of the ſymptoms of ſpiritual death; but I would not leave you dead as I found you; and therefore I intend now to conſider the counterpart of that ſubject, and ſhew you the nature and ſymptoms of ſpiritual life.

I doubt not but a number of you have been made alive to God by his quickening ſpirit; but many, I fear, ſtill continue *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*; and, while ſuch are around me, I cannot help imagining my ſituation ſomething like that of the prophet Ezekiel (ch. xxxvii.) in the midſt of the valley full of dry bones, ſpread far and wide around him: and ſhould I be aſked, *Can theſe dry bones*, can theſe dead ſouls *live?* I muſt anſwer with him,—*O Lord God, thou knoweſt.* "Lord, I ſee no ſymptoms of life in them, no tendency towards it. I know nothing is impoſſible to thee: I firmly believe thou canſt inſpire them with life, dry and dead as they are: and what thy deſigns are towards them, whether thou intendeſt to exert thy all-quickening power upon them, thou only knoweſt, and I would not preſume to determine; but this I know, that, if they are left to themſelves, they will continue dead to all eternity; for, O Lord, the experiment has been repeatedly tried; thy ſervant has over and over made thoſe quickening applications to them which thy Word, that ſacred diſpenſary, preſcribes; but all in vain; they ſtill continue dead towards thee, and lie putrifying more and more in treſpaſſes and ſins: however, at thy command, I would attempt the moſt unpromiſing undertaking; I would proclaim even unto dry bones and dead ſouls, *O ye dry bones*, O ye dead ſouls, *hear the word of the Lord.* Ezek. xxxvii. 4. I would alſo cry aloud for the animating breath of the holy Spirit, *Come from the four winds and breathe; breathe upon theſe ſlain, that they may live.* v. 9.

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Ye dead ſinners, I would make one attempt more in the name of the Lord to bring you to life; and if I have the leaſt hope of ſucceſs, it is entirely owing to the encouraging peradventure that the quickening ſpirit of Chriſt may work upon your hearts while I am addreſſing myſelf to your ears. And, O Sirs, let us all keep our ſouls in a praying poſture, throughout this diſcourſe. If one of you ſhould fall into a ſwoon or an apoplexy, how would all about you beſtir themſelves to bring you to life again! And alas! ſhall dead ſouls lie ſo thick among us, in every aſſembly, in every family; and ſhall no means be uſed for their recovery? Did Martha and Mary apply to Jeſus with all the arts of importunity in behalf of their ſick and deceaſed brother, and are there not ſome of you that have dead relations, dead friends and neighbours, I mean dead in the worſt ſenſe, "dead in treſpaſſes and ſins?" and will you not apply to Jeſus, the Lord of life, and follow him with your importunate cries, till he come and call them to life? Now let parents turn interceſſors for their children, children for their parents, friend for friend, neighbour for neighbour, yea enemy for enemy. O! ſhould we all take this method, we might ſoon expect to ſee the valley of dry bones full of living ſouls, *an exceeding great army*. Ezek. xxxvii. 10.

In praying for this great and glorious event, you do not pray for an impoſſibility. Thouſands, as dead as they, have obtained a joyful reſurrection by the power of God. Here in my text you have an inſtance of a promiſcuous crowd of Jews and Gentiles that had lain dead in ſin together, and even St. Paul among them, who were recovered to life, and are now enjoying an immortal life in the heavenly regions; and, bleſſed by God, this ſpiritual life is not entirely extinct among us. Among the multitudes of dead ſouls that we every where meet with, we find here and there a ſoul that has very different ſymptoms: once indeed it was like the reſt; but now, while they are quite ſenſeleſs of divine things, and have no vital aſpirations after

after God, this ſoul cannot be content with the richeſt affluence of created enjoyments; it pants and breathes after God; it feeds upon his word, it feels an almighty energy in eternal things, and receives vital ſenſations from them. It diſcovers life and vigour in devotion, and ſerves the living God with pleaſure, tho' it is alſo ſubject to fits of languiſhment, and at times ſeems juſt expiring, and to loſe all ſenſation. And whence is this vaſt difference? Why is this ſoul ſo different from what it once was, and what thouſands around ſtill are? Why can it not, like them, and like itſelf formerly, lie dead and ſenſeleſs in ſin, without any vital impreſſions or experiences from God or divine things? The reaſon, the happy reaſon, my brethren, is, this is a living ſoul: "God, out of the great love wherewith he loved it, hath quickened it together with Chriſt," and hence it is alive to him.

My preſent deſign is to explain the nature and properties of this divine life, and to ſhew you the manner in which it is uſually begun in the ſoul: I ſhall open with the conſideration of the laſt particular.

Here you muſt obſerve, that, though ſpiritual life is inſtantaneouſly infuſed, yet God prepares the ſoul for its reception by a courſe of previous operations. He ſpent ſix days in the creation of the world, though he might have ſpoken it into being in an inſtant.—Thus he uſually creates the ſoul anew after a gradual proceſs of preparatory actions. In forming the firſt man, he firſt created chaos out of nothing, then he digeſted it into earth; on the ſixth day he formed and organized the earth into a body, with all its endleſs variety of members, juices, muſcles, fibres, veins, and arteries; and then, after this proceſs, he inſpired it with a living ſoul; and what was but a lump of clay, ſprung up a perfect man. Thus alſo the fœtus in the womb is for ſome months in formation before the ſoul or the principle of life is infuſed. In like manner the Almighty proceeds in quickening us with ſpiritual life; we all paſs through a courſe of preparation,

tion, though ſome through a longer, and ſome ſhorter. And as one reaſon why the great Creator took up ſo much time in the creation of the world probably was, that he might allow the angels time for leiſurely ſurveys of the aſtoniſhing proceſs, ſo he may advance thus gradually in the new creation, that we may obſerve the various ſteps of the operation, and make proper reflections upon it in future life. My preſent deſign is to trace theſe ſteps to their grand reſult, that you may know whether ever divine grace has carried you through this gracious proceſs.

And that you may not fall into needleſs perplexities, it may be neceſſary for me to premiſe farther, that there is a great variety in theſe preparatory operations, and in the degrees of ſpiritual life. Indeed the difference is only circumſtantial, for the work is ſubſtantially the ſame, and ſpiritual life is ſubſtantially the ſame in all; but then, in ſuch circumſtances as the length of time, the particular external means, the degree of previous terror, and of ſubſequent joy and vitality, &c. God exerciſes a ſovereign freedom, and ſhews that he has a variety of ways by which to accompliſh his end; and it is no matter how we obtain it, if we have but ſpiritual life. I ſhall therefore endeavour to confine myſelf to the ſubſtance of this work, without its peculiarities, in different ſubjects; and, when I cannot avoid deſcending to particulars, I ſhall endeavour ſo to diverſify them, as that they may be eaſily adapted to the various caſes of different Chriſtians. To draw their common lineaments, whereby they may be diſtinguiſhed from all others, is ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe; whereas, to draw the particular lineaments, or peculiar features, whereby they may be diſtinguiſhed from one another, is a very difficult taſk, and cannot be of any great ſervice to what I have now in deſign.

I have only one thing more to premiſe, and that is, that the way by which divine grace prepares a ſinner for ſpiritual life, is by working upon all the principles of

of the rational life, and exciting him to exert them to the utmoſt to obtain it. Here it is proper for you to recollect what I obſerved in my laſt diſcourſe, that even a ſinner dead in treſpaſſes and ſins is alive, and capable of action in other reſpects: he can not only perform the actions, and feel the ſenſations of animal life, but he can alſo exerciſe his intellectual powers about intellectual objects, and even about divine things: he is capable of thinking of theſe, and of receiving ſome impreſſions from them: he is alſo capable of attending upon the ordinances of the goſpel, and performing the external duties of religion. Theſe things a ſinner may do, and yet be dead in ſin. Indeed he will not exerciſe his natural powers about theſe things while left to himſelf: he has the power, but then he has no diſpoſition to employ it: he is indeed capable of meditating upon ſpiritual things, but what does this avail when he will not turn his mind to ſuch objects? or if he does, he conſiders them as mere ſpeculations, and not as the moſt intereſting and important realities. How few, or how ſuperficial and unaffecting are a ſinner's thoughts of them! Heaven and hell are objects that may ſtrike the paſſions, and raiſe the joys and fears of a natural man, but in general he is little or nothing impreſſed with them. He is capable of prayer, hearing, and uſing the means of grace; but I believe, if you make obſervations upon the conduct of mankind, that you will find they are but ſeldom employed in theſe duties, or that they perform them in ſuch a careleſs manner, that they have no tendency to anſwer the end of their inſtitution. In ſhort, the more I know of mankind, I have the lower opinion of what they will do in religion when left to themſelves. They have a natural power, and we have ſeen all poſſible means uſed with them to excite them to put it forth; but alas! all is in vain, and nothing will be done to propoſe till God ſtir them up to exert their natural abilities: and this he performs as a preparative for ſpiritual life. He brings the ſinner to exert

exert all his active powers in ſeeking this divine principle: nature does her utmoſt, and all outward means are tried before a ſupernatural principle is implanted.

The evangeliſt John has given us the hiſtory of the reſurrection of the dead body of Lazarus after it had been four days in the grave; and I would now give you the hiſtory of a more glorious reſurrection, the reſurrection of a ſoul that had lain dead for months and years, and yet is at laſt quickened by the ſame almighty power with a divine and immortal life.

Should I exemplify it by a particular inſtance, I might fix upon this or that perſon in this aſſembly, and remind you, and inform others, of the proceſs of this work in your ſouls. And O! how happy are ſuch of you, that you may be produced as inſtances in this caſe!

You lay for ten, twenty, thirty years, or more, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins; you did not breathe and pant like a living ſoul after God and holineſs; you had little more ſenſe of the burden of ſin than a corpſe of the preſſure of a mountain; you had no appetite for the living bread that came down from heaven; the vital pulſe of ſacred paſſions did not beat in your hearts towards God and divine things, but you lay putrifying in ſin; filthy luſts preyed upon you like worms on the bodies of the dead; you ſpread the contagion of ſin around you by your converſation and example, like the ſtench and corrupt effluvia of a rotten carcaſs; you were odious and abominable to God, fit to be ſhut up in the infernal pit out of his ſight; and you were objects of horror and lamentation to all that knew and duly conſidered your caſe, your deplorable caſe. During this time many quickening applications were made to you; you had friends that uſed all means to bring you to life again; but alas! all in vain; conſcience proved your friend, and pierced and chafed you, to bring you to ſome feeling, but you remained ſtill ſenſeleſs, or the ſymptoms of life ſoon vaniſhed.—God did not caſt you away as irrecoverably dead,

dead, but ſtirred and agitated you within, and ſtruggled long with the principles of death to ſubdue them: and, if it was your happy lot to live under a faithful miniſtry, the living oracles that contain the ſeeds of the divine life were applied to you with care and ſolicitude. The terrors of the Lord were thundered in your ears to awaken you. The experiment of a Saviour's dying love, and the rich grace of the goſpel, were repeatedly tried upon you: now you were carried within hearing of the heavenly muſic, and within ſight of the glories of Paradiſe, to try if theſe would charm you; now you were, as it were, held over the flames of hell, that they might by their pungent pains ſcorch and ſtartle you into life. Providence alſo concurred with theſe applications, and tried to recover you by mercies and judgments, ſickneſs and health, loſſes and poſſeſſions, diſappointments and ſucceſſes, threatenings and deliverances. If it was your unhappy lot to lie among dead ſouls like yourſelf, you had indeed but little pity from them, nay, they and Satan were plying you with their opiates and poiſon to confirm the deadly ſleep. And O! how aſtoniſhing is it that you ſhould be quickened in a charnel-houſe, in the manſions of the dead, with dead ſouls lying all round you! But if it was your happineſs to be in the ſociety of the living, they pitied you, they ſtirred and agitated you with their warnings and perſuaſions, they, like Martha and Mary in behalf of their deceaſed brother, went to Jeſus with their cries and importunities, "Lord, my child, my parent, my ſervant, my neighbour is dead, O come and reſtore him to life! Lord, if thou hadſt been here, he would not have died; but even now I know it is not too late for thee to raiſe him." Thus, when one is dead in our heavenly Father's family, the whole houſe ſhould be alarmed, and all the domeſtics be buſy in trying to bring him to life again. But O! reflect with ſhame and ſorrow how long all theſe quickening applications were in vain; you ſtill lay in a dead ſleep, or, if at times you ſeem-

ed to move, and gave us hopes you were coming to life again, you ſoon relapſed, and grew as ſenſeleſs as ever. And alas! are there not ſome of you in this condition to this very moment? O deplorable ſight! May the hour come, and O that this may be the hour, in which ſuch dead ſouls *ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God and live.* John v. 25.

But as to ſuch of you in whom I would exemplify this hiſtory of a ſpiritual reſurrection when your caſe was thus deplorable, and ſeemingly helpleſs, the happy hour, the time of love came, when you muſt live. When all theſe applications had been unſucceſsful, the all-quickening ſpirit of God determined to exert more of his energy, and work more effectually upon you. Perhaps a verſe in your Bible, a ſentence in a ſermon, an alarming providence, the converſation of a pious friend, or ſomething that unexpectedly occurred to your own thoughts, firſt ſtruck your minds with unuſual force; you found you could not harden yourſelves againſt it as you were wont to do; it was attended with a power you never before had felt, and which you could not reſiſt: this made you thoughtful and penſive, and turned your minds to objects that you were wont to neglect; this made you ſtand and pauſe, and think of the ſtate of your neglected ſouls: you began to fear matters were wrong with you; "What will become of me when I leave this world? where ſhall I reſide for ever? Am I prepared for the eternal world? How have I ſpent my life?" Theſe, and the like inquiries put you to a ſtand, and you could not paſs over them ſo ſuperficially as you were wont to do; your ſins now appeared to you in a new light; you were ſhocked and ſurprized at their malignant nature, their number, their aggravations, and their dreadful conſequences. The great God, whom you were wont to neglect, appeared to you as a Being that demanded your regard; you ſaw he was indeed a venerable, awful, majeſtic Being, with whom you had the moſt important concern: in ſhort, you ſaw that

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ſuch a life as you had led would never bring you to heaven: you ſaw you muſt make religion more your buſineſs than you had ever done, and hereupon you altered your former courſe; you broke off from ſeveral of your vices, you deſerted your extravagant company, and you began to frequent the throne of grace, to ſtudy religion, and to attend upon its inſtitutions; and this you did with ſome degree of earneſtneſs and ſolicitude.

When you were thus reformed, you began to flatter yourſelves that you had eſcaped out of your dangerous condition, and ſecured the divine favour; now you began to view yourſelves with ſecret ſelf-applauſe as true Chriſtians; but all this time the reformation was only outward, and there was no new principle of a divine ſupernatural life implanted in your hearts: you had not the generous paſſions and ſenſations of living ſouls towards God, but acted entirely from natural, ſelfiſh principles: you had no clear heart-affecting views of the intrinſic evil, and odious nature of ſin, conſidered in itſelf, nor of the entire univerſal corruption of your nature, and the neceſſity not only of adorning your outer man by an external reformation, but of an inward change of heart by the almighty power of God: you were not deeply ſenſible of the extent and ſpirituality of the divine law, nor of the infinite purity and inexorable juſtice of the Deity: you had no love for religion and virtue for their own ſakes, but only on account of their happy conſequences. Indeed your love of novelty and a regard to your own happineſs might ſo work upon you, for a time, that you might have very raiſed and delightful paſſions in religious duties; but all your religion at that time was a mere ſyſtem of ſelfiſhneſs, and you had no generous diſintereſted delight in holineſs for its own excellency, nor did you heartily reliſh the ſtrictneſs of pure, living religion: you were alſo under the government of a ſelf-righteous ſpirit: your own good works were the ground of your hopes, and you had no reliſh for the mortifying

mortifying doctrine of ſalvation through the mere mercy of God and the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt: though your education taught you to acknowledge Chriſt as the only Saviour, and aſcribe all your hopes to his death, yet in reality he was of very little importance in your religion; he had but little place in your heart and affections, even when you urged his name as your only plea at the throne of grace: in ſhort, you had not the ſpirit of the goſpel, nor any ſpiritual life within you. And this is all the religion with which multitudes are contented: with this they obtain a name that they live; but in the ſight of God, and in reality, they are dead; and had you been ſuffered to reſt here, according to your own deſire, you would have been dead ſtill.

But God, who is rich (O how inconceivably rich!) in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved you, reſolved to carry on his work in you; and therefore, while you were flattering yourſelves, and elated with a proud conceit of a happy change in your condition, he ſurprized you with a very different view of your caſe; he opened your eyes farther, and then you ſaw, you felt thoſe things, of which till then you had little ſenſe or apprehenſion; ſuch as the corruption of your hearts, the awful ſtrictneſs of the divine law, your utter inability to yield perfect obedience, and the neceſſity of an inward change of the inclinations and reliſhes of your ſoul. Theſe, and a great many other things of a like nature, broke in upon your minds with ſtriking evidence, and a kind of almighty energy; and now you ſaw you were ſtill "dead in ſin," weak, indiſpoſed, averſe towards ſpiritual things, and "dead in law," condemned to everlaſting death and miſery by its righteous ſentence: now you ſet about the duties of religion with more earneſtneſs than ever; now you prayed, you heard, and uſed the other means of grace as for your life, for you ſaw that your eternal life was indeed at ſtake; and now, when you put the matter to a thorough trial, you were more ſenſible than

than ever of your own weakneſs, and the difficulties in your way. "O! who would have thought my heart had been ſo depraved that it ſhould thus fly off from God, and ſtruggle and reluctate againſt returning to him?" ſuch was then your language. Alas! you found yourſelves quite helpleſs, and all your efforts feeble and ineffectual; then you perceived yourſelves really dead in ſin, and that you muſt continue ſo to all eternity, unleſs quickened by a power infinitely ſuperior to your own: not that you lay ſlothful and inactive at this time; no, never did you exert yourſelves ſo vigorouſly in all your life, never did you beſiege the throne of grace with ſuch earneſt importunity, never did you hear and read with ſuch eager attention, or make ſuch a vigorous reſiſtance againſt ſin and temptation: all your natural powers were exerted to the higheſt pitch, for now you ſaw your caſe required it: but you found all your moſt vigorous endeavours inſufficient, and you were ſenſible that, without the aſſiſtance of a ſuperior power, the work of religion could never be effected.

Now you were reduced very low indeed. While you imagined you could render yourſelves ſafe by a reformation in your own power, you were not much alarmed at your condition, though you ſaw it bad. But O! to feel yourſelves dead in ſin, and that you cannot help yourſelves; to ſee yourſelves in a ſtate of condemnation, liable to execution every moment, and yet to find all your own endeavours utterly inſufficient to relieve you; to be obliged, after all you had done, to lie at mercy, and confeſs that you were as deſerving of everlaſting puniſhment as ever the moſt notorious criminal was of the ſtroke af public juſtice: this was a ſtate of extreme dejection, terror, and anxiety indeed. The proud, ſelf-confident creature was never thoroughly mortified and humbled till now, when he is ſlain by the law, and entirely cut off from all hopes from himſelf.

And

And now, finding you could not ſave yourſelves, you began to caſt about you, and look out for another to ſave you: now you were more ſenſible than ever of the abſolute need of Jeſus; and you cried and reached after him, and ſtirred up yourſelves to take hold of him. The goſpel brought the free offer of him to your ears, and you would fain have accepted of him; but here new difficulties aroſe. Alas! you did not think yourſelves good enough to accept of him, and hence you took a great deal of fruitleſs pains to make yourſelves better: you alſo found your hearts ſtrangely averſe to the goſpel-method of ſalvation, and, though a ſenſe of your neceſſity made you try to work up yourſelves to an approbation of it, yet you could not affectionately acquieſce in it, and cordially reliſh it.

And now, how melancholy was your ſituation! you were "ſhut up to the faith;" Gal. iii. 23. there was no other poſſible way of eſcape, and yet, alas! you could not take this way: now you were ready to cry, "I am cut off: my ſtrength and my hope are periſhed from the Lord;" but, bleſſed be God, he did not leave you in this condition. Man's extremity of diſtreſs is God's opportunity for relief and ſalvation; and ſo you found it.

Now the proceſs of preparatory operations is juſt come to a reſult. Now it is time for God to work, for nature has done her utmoſt, and has been found utterly inſufficient; now it is proper a divine ſupernatural principle ſhould be infuſed, for all the principles of nature have failed, and the proud ſinner is obliged to own it, and ſtand ſtill, and ſee the ſalvation of God. In this ſituation you wanted nothing but ſuch a divine principle to make you living chriſtians indeed. Theſe preparatives were like the taking away the ſtone from the ſepulchre of Lazarus, which was a prelude of that almighty voice which called him from the dead. Now you appear to me like the dry bones in Ezekiel's viſion, in one ſtage of the operation.

After

After there had been a noiſe, and a ſhaking among them, and the bones had come together, bone to his bone; *I beheld*, ſays he, *and lo, the ſinews and the fleſh came up upon them, and the ſkin covered them above; but there was no breath in them*; Ezek. xxxvii. 8. this was all that was wanting to make them living men. In like manner you at this time had the external appearance of chriſtians, but you had no divine ſupernatural life in you; you were but the fair carcaſes of chriſtians; your religion had a body completely formed, but it had no ſoul in it; and, had the holy ſpirit now given over his work, you would have continued dead ſtill.

But now the important criſis is come, when he who ſtood over the grave of Lazarus, and pronounced the life-reſtoring mandate, *Lazarus, come forth*; when he who breathed into Adam the breath of life, and made him a living ſoul; I ſay, now the criſis is come, when he will implant the principles of life in your ſouls; ſuddenly you feel the amazing change, and find you are acting from principles entirely new to you; for now your hearts that were wont to reluctate, and ſtart back from God, riſe to him with the ſtrongeſt aſpirations: now the way of ſalvation through Chriſt, which you could never reliſh before, appears all amiable and glorious, and captivates your whole ſouls. Holineſs has lovely and powerful charms, which captivate you to the moſt willing obedience, notwithſtanding your former diſguſt to it; and, though once you were enamoured with ſin, or diſliked it only becauſe you could not indulge it with impunity, it now appears to you a mere maſs of corruption and deformity, an abominable thing, which you hate above all other things on earth or in hell. At this juncture you were animated with a new life in every faculty of your ſouls, and hereupon you felt the inſtincts, the appetites, the ſympathies and antipathies of a new life, a divine life, juſtly ſtiled by the apoſtle *the life of God*; the life of God in the ſoul of man. The pulſe of ſacred paſſions began

began to beat towards ſpiritual objects; the vital warmth of love ſpread itſelf through your whole frame; you breathed out your deſires and prayers before God; like a new-born infant you began to cry after him, and at times you have learned to liſp his name with filial endearment, and cry *Abba, Father*; you hungered and thirſted after righteouſneſs, and as every kind of life muſt have its proper nouriſhment, ſo your ſpiritual life fed upon Chriſt, the living bread, and the ſincere milk of his word. You alſo felt a new ſet of ſenſations; divine things now made deep and tender impreſſions upon you; the great realities of religion and eternity now affected you in a manner unknown before; you likewiſe found your ſouls actuated with life and vigour in the ſervice of God, and in the duties you owed to mankind. This ſtrange alteration, no doubt, filled you with ſurprize and amazement, ſomething like that of Adam when he found himſelf ſtart into life out of his eternal non-exiſtence. With theſe new ſenſations every thing appeared to you in a quite different light, and you could not but wonder that you had never perceived them in that manner before.

Thus, my dear brethren, when you were even dead in ſin, God quickened you together with Chriſt. It is true, the principle of life might be very weak at firſt, like the life of a new-born infant, or a fœtus juſt animated in the womb: nay, it may be but very weak ſtill, and at times may languiſh, and ſeem juſt expiring in the agonies of death; but, bleſſed be the quickening ſpirit of Chriſt, ſince the happy hour of your reſurrection you have never been, and you never will be to all eternity, what you once were, "dead in treſpaſſes and ſins." Should I give you your own hiſtory ſince that time, it would be to this purpoſe, and you will diſcern many ſymptoms of life in it. You have often known what ſickneſs of ſoul is, as well as of body; and ſometimes it has riſen to ſuch a height as to endanger your ſpiritual life. The ſeeds of ſin, that

ſtill

ſtill lurk in your conſtitution, like the principles of death, or a deadly poiſon circulating through your veins, have often ſtruggled for the maſtery, and caſt you into languiſhing or violent diſorders; then was the divine life oppreſſed, and you could not freely draw the breath of prayer and pious deſires; you loſt the appetite for the word of God, and what you received did not digeſt well and turn to kindly nouriſhment; the pulſe of ſacred paſſions beat faint and irregular, the vital heat decayed, and you felt a death-like cold creeping upon you and benumbing you. Sometimes you have been afflicted, perhaps, with convulſions of violent and outrageous paſſions, with the dropſy of inſatiable deſires after things below, with the lethargy of carnal ſecurity, or the fever of luſt: at other times you have felt an univerſal diſorder through your whole frame, and you hardly knew what ailed you, only you were ſure your ſouls were not well; but perhaps your moſt common diſorder that ſeizes you is a kind of conſumption, a lowneſs of ſpirits, a languor and weakneſs, the want of appetite for your ſpiritual food, or perhaps a nauſea and diſguſt towards it; you alſo live in a country very unwholeſome to living ſouls; you dwell among the dead, and catch contagion from the converſation of thoſe around you, and this heightens the diſorder: add further, that old ſerpent the devil labours to infect you with his deadly poiſon, and increaſe the peccant humours by his temptations: at ſuch times you can hardly feel any workings of ſpiritual life in you, and you fear you are entirely dead; but examine ſtrictly, and you will diſcover ſome vital ſymptoms even in this bad habit of ſoul; for does not your new nature exert itſelf to work off the diſorder? Are not your ſpirits in a ferment, and do you not feel yourſelves in exquiſite pain, or at leaſt greatly uneaſy? Give all the world to a ſick man, and he deſpiſes it all: "O give me my health," ſays he, "or you give me nothing." So it is with you; nothing can content you while your

ſouls are thus out of order. Do you not long for their recovery, that you may go about your buſineſs again; I mean that you may engage in the ſervice of God with all the vigour of health? and do you not apply to Chriſt as your only phyſician in this condition? And O! what an healing balm is his blood! what a reviving cordial is his love! and how kindly does his ſpirit purge off the corrupt humours, and ſubdue the principles of ſin and death! Has not experience taught you the meaning of the apoſtle, when he ſays, *Chriſt is our life:* and *I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me.* Gal. ii. 20. Do you not percieve that Chriſt is your vital head, and that you revive or languiſh juſt as he communicates or withholds his influence? And have you not been taught in the ſame way what is the meaning of that expreſſion ſo often repeated, *The juſt ſhall live by his faith?* Hab. ii. 4. Do you not find that faith is, as it were, the grand artery by which you derive life from Chriſt, and by which it is circulated through your whole frame; and that when faith languiſhes, then you weaken, pine away, and perhaps fall into a ſwoon, as though you were quite dead? Are you not careful of the health of your ſouls? You endeavour to keep them warm with the love of God; you ſhun thoſe ſickly regions as far as you can, where the example and converſation of the wicked ſpread their deadly infection, and you love to dwell among living ſouls, and breathe in their wholeſome air. Upon the whole, it is evident, notwithſtanding your frequent indiſpoſitions, you have ſome life within you: life takes occaſion to ſhew itſelf, even from your diſorders. It is a plain ſymptom of it, that you have ſomething within you that makes ſuch a vigorous reſiſtance againſt the principles of ſin and death, and throws your whole frame into a ferment, till it has wrought off the diſtemper. In ſhort, you have the ſenſations, the ſympathies and antipathies, the pleaſures and pains of living ſouls.

And

And is it ſo indeed? Then from this moment begin to rejoice and bleſs the Lord, who raiſed you to ſpiritual life. O let the hearts he has quickened beat with his love; let the lips he has opened, when quivering in death, ſpeak his praiſe, and devote that life to him which he has given you, and which he ſtill ſupports!

Conſider what a divine and noble kind of life he has given you. It is a capacity and aptitude for the moſt exalted and divine ſervices and enjoyments. Now you have a reliſh for the Supreme Good as your happineſs, the only proper food for your immortal ſouls, and he will not ſuffer you to hunger and thirſt in vain, but will ſatisfy the appetities he has implanted in your nature. You have ſome ſpirit and life in his ſervice, and are not like the dead ſouls around you, that are all alive towards other objects, but abſolutely dead towards him: you have alſo noble and exalted ſenſations; you are capable of a ſet of pleaſures of a more refined and ſublime nature than what are reliſhed by groveling ſinners. From your inmoſt ſouls you deteſt and nauſeate whatever is mean, baſe, and abominable, and you can feaſt on what is pure, amiable, excellent, and worthy of your love. Your vitiated taſte for traſh and poiſon is cured, and you feed upon heavenly bread, upon food agreeable to the conſtitution of your ſpiritual nature; and hence you may infer your meetneſs for the heavenly world, that region of perfect vitality. You have a diſpoſition for its enjoyments and ſervices, and this is the grand preparative. God will not encumber the heaven of his glory with dead ſouls, nor infect the pure ſalubrious air of Paradiſe with the poiſon of their corruption; but the everlaſting doors are always open for living ſouls, and not one of them ſhall ever be excluded; nay, the life of heaven is already within you; the life that reigns with immortal health and vigour above, is the very ſame with that which works in your breaſts; only there it is arrived to maturity and perfection, and here it is in its rudiments

ments and weakneſs. Your animal life, which was hardly perceivable in the womb, was the very ſame with that which now poſſeſſes you, only now it is come to perfection. Thus you are now angels in embryo, the fœtus (might I be allowed the expreſſion) of glorified immortals; and when you are born out of the womb of time into the eternal world, this feeble ſpark of ſpiritual life will kindle and blaze, and render you as active and vigorous as "the rapt ſeraph that adorns and burns." Then you will feel no more weakneſs, no more languors, no more qualms of indiſpoſition; the poiſon of temptation and the contagion of bad example cannot reach you there; and the inward ſeeds of ſickneſs and death will be purged entirely out of your ſouls: you will be got quite out of the ſickly country, and breathe a pure reviving air, the natural element of your ſouls. There you will find the fountain, yea, whole rivers of the waters of life, of which you will drink in large draughts for ever and ever, and which will inſpire you with immortal life and vigour. O how happy are you in this ſingle gift of ſpiritual life! this is a life that cannot periſh, even in the ruins of the world. What though you muſt ere long yield your mortal bodies and animal life to death and rottenneſs? your moſt important life is immortal, and ſubject to no ſuch diſſolution; and therefore be courageous in the name of the Lord, and bid defiance to all the calamities of life, and all the terrors of death; for *your life is hid with Chriſt in God; and when Chriſt, who is your life, ſhall appear, then ſhall you alſo appear with him in glory.* Col. iii. 3, 4.

I would willingly go on in this ſtrain, and leave the pulpit with a reliſh of theſe delightful truths upon my ſpirit; but, alas! I muſt turn my addreſs to another ſet of perſons in this aſſembly; but "where is the Lord God of Elijah," who reſtored the Shunamite's ſon to life by means of that prophet? I am going to call to the dead, and I know they will not hear, unleſs he attend my feeble voice with his almighty

ty power. I would pray over you, like Elijah over the dead child, *O Lord God, let this ſinner's life come into him again.* 1 Kings xvii. 21. Are not the living and the dead promiſcuouſly blended in this aſſembly? Here is a dead ſoul, there another, and there another, all over the houſe; and here and there a few living ſouls thinly ſcattered among them. Have you ever been carried through ſuch a preparatory proceſs as I have deſcribed? or if you are uncertain about this, as ſome may be who are animated with ſpiritual life, inquire, have you the feelings, the appetites and averſions, the pleaſing and the painful ſenſations of living ſouls? Methinks conſcience breaks its ſilence in ſome of you, whether you will or not, and cries, "O no; there is not a ſpark of life in this breaſt."

Well, my poor deceaſed friends (for ſo I may call you) I hope you will ſeriouſly attend to what I am going ſeriouſly to ſay to you. I have no bad deſign upon you, but only to reſtore you to life. And though your caſe is really diſcouraging, yet I hope it is not quite deſperate. The principles of nature, reaſon, ſelf-love, joy, and fear are ſtill alive in you, and you are capable of ſome application to divine things. And, as I told you, it is upon the principles of nature that God is wont to work, to prepare the ſoul for the infuſion of a ſupernatural life. And theſe I would now work upon, in hopes you are not proof againſt conſiderations of the greateſt weight and energy. I earneſtly beg you would lay to heart ſuch things as theſe.

Can you content yourſelves with an animal life, the life of beaſts, with that ſuperfluity, reaſon, juſt to render you a more ingenious and ſelf-tormenting kind of brutes; more artful in gratifying your ſordid appetites, and yet ſtill uneaſy for want of an unknown ſomething; a care that the brutal world, being deſtitute of reaſon, are unmoleſted with? O! have you no ambition to be animated with a divine immortal life, the life of God?

Can

Can you be contented with a mere temporal life, when your ſouls muſt exiſt for ever? That infinite world beyond the grave is repleniſhed with nothing but the terrors of death to you, if you are deſtitute of ſpiritual life. And O can you bear the thought of reſiding among its grim and ghaſtly terrors for ever?

Are you contented to be cut off from God, as a mortified member from the body, and to be baniſhed for ever from all the joys of his preſence? You cannot be admitted to heaven without ſpiritual life. Hell is the ſepulchre for dead ſouls, and thither you muſt be ſent, if you ſtill continue dead. And does not this thought affect you?

Conſider alſo, now is the only time in which you can be reſtored to life. And O! will you let it paſs by without improvement?

Shall all the means that have been uſed for your revival be in vain? Or the ſtrivings of the ſpirit, the alarms of your own conſciences, the bleſſings and chaſtiſements of Providence, the perſuaſions, tears, and lamentations of your living friends, O! ſhall all theſe be in vain? Can you bear the thought? Surely, no. Therefore, O heave and ſtruggle to burſt the chains of death. Cry mightily to God to quicken you. Uſe all the means of vivification, and avoid every deadly and contagious thing.

I know not, my brethren, how this thought will affect us at parting to-day, that we have left behind us many a dead ſoul. But ſuppoſe we ſhould leave as many bodies here behind us as there are of dead ſouls among us; ſuppoſe every ſinner deſtitute of ſpiritual life ſhould now be ſtruck dead before us, O how would this floor be overlaid with dead corpſes! How few of us would eſcape! What bitter lamentations and tears would be among us! One would loſe a huſband or a wife, another a child or a parent, another a friend or a neighbour. And have we hearts to mourn and tears to ſhed over ſuch an event as this, and have we

no

no compaſſion for dead ſouls? Is there none to mourn over them? Sinners, if you will ſtill continue dead, there are ſome here to-day who part with you with this wiſh, *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the ſlain of the daughter of my people.* And O that our mournings may reach the ears of the Lord of life, and that you might be quickened from your death in treſpaſſes and ſins! Amen and Amen.

SERMON VI.

Poor and contrite Spirits the Objects of the Divine Favour.

ISAIAH lxvi. 2. *To this man will I look; even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

AS we conſiſt of animal bodies as well as immortal ſouls, and are endowed with corporeal ſenſes as well as rational powers, God, who has wiſely adapted our religion to our make, requires bodily as well as ſpiritual worſhip; and commands us not only to exerciſe the inward powers of our minds in proper acts of devotion, but alſo to expreſs our inward devotion in ſuitable external actions, and to attend upon him in the ſenſible outward ordinances which he has appointed. Thus it is under the goſpel; but it was more remarkably ſo under the law, which, compared with the pure and ſpiritual worſhip of the goſpel, was a ſyſtem of carnal ordinances, and required a great deal of external pomp and grandeur, and bodily ſervices. Thus a coſtly and magnificent ſtructure was erected, by divine direction, in the wilderneſs, called the tabernacle, becauſe built in the form of a tent, and moveable from place to place; and afterwards a moſt ſtately temple

temple was built by Solomon with immenſe coſt, where the divine worſhip ſhould be ſtatedly celebrated, and where all the males of Iſrael ſhould ſolemnly meet for that purpoſe three times in the year.

Theſe externals were not intended to exclude the internal worſhip of the Spirit, but to expreſs and aſſiſt it. And theſe ceremonials were not to be put into the place of morals, but obſerved as helps to the practice of them, and to prefigure the great Meſſiah. Even under the Moſaic diſpenſation, God had the greateſt regard to holineſs of heart and a good life; and the ſtricteſt obſerver of ceremonies could not be accepted without them.

But it is natural to degenerate mankind to invert the order of things, to place apart the eaſieſt and meaneſt part of religion, for the whole of it, to reſt in the externals of religion as ſufficient, without regarding the heart, and to depend upon a phariſaical ſtrictneſs in ceremonial obſervances, as an excuſe or atonement for neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.

This was the unhappy error of the Jews in Iſaiah's time; and this the Lord would correct in the firſt verſes of this chapter.

The Jews gloried in their having the houſe of God among them, and were ever truſting in vain words, ſaying, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are theſe.* Jer. vii. 4. They filled his altars with coſtly ſacrifices; and in theſe they truſted to make atonement for ſin, and ſecure the divine favour.

As to their ſacrifices God lets them know, that while they had no regard to their morals, but choſe their own ways, and their ſouls delighted in their abominations, while they preſented them in a formal manner, without the fire of divine love, their ſacrifices were ſo far from procuring his acceptance, that they were odious to him. He abhors their moſt expenſive offerings as abominable and profane. He *that killeth*

killeth an ox for ſacrifice is as far from being accepted, *as if he* unjuſtly *ſlew a man*; *he that ſacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck*, &c. Iſaiah lxvi. 3.

To remove this ſuperſtitious confidence in the temple, the Lord informs them that he had no need of it; that, large and magnificent as it was, it was not fit to contain him; and that, in conſecrating it to him, they ſhould not proudly think that they had given him any thing to which he had no prior right. "Thus ſaith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, where I reign conſpicuous in the viſible majeſty and grandeur of a God; and though the earth is not adorned with ſuch illuſtrious diſplays of my immediate preſence, though it does not ſhine in all the glory of my royal palace on high, yet it is a little province in my immenſe empire, and ſubject to my authority; it is my footſtool. If, then, heaven is my throne, and earth is my footſtool; if the whole creation is my kingdom, where is the houſe that ye build unto me? where is your temple which appears ſo ſtately in your eyes? it is vaniſhed, it is ſunk into nothing. Is it able to contain that infinite Being to whom the whole earth is but a humble footſtool, and the vaſt heaven but a throne? Can you vainly imagine that my preſence can be confined to you in the narrow bounds of a temple, when the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain me? Where is the place of my reſt? can you provide a place for my repoſe, as though I were weary? or can my preſence be reſtrained to one place, incapable of acting beyond the preſcribed limits? No; infinite ſpace only can equal my being and perfections; infinite ſpace only is a ſufficient ſphere for my operations.

"Can you imagine you can bribe my favour, and give me ſomething I had no right to before, by all the ſtately building you can rear to my name? Is not univerſal nature mine? For all theſe things hath mine hand made out of nothing, and all theſe things have been, or ſtill ſubſiſt by the ſupport of my all-preſerv-

ing hand, and what right can be more valid and inalienable than that founded upon creation? Your ſilver and gold are mine, and mine the cattle upon a thouſand hills; and therefore of mine own do you give me, ſaith the Lord."

Theſe are ſuch majeſtic ſtrains of language as are worthy a God. Thus it becomes him to advance himſelf above the whole creation, and to aſſert his abſolute property in and independency upon the univerſe.

Had he only turned to us the bright ſide of his throne, that dazzles us with inſufferable ſplendor; had he only diſplayed his Majeſty unallayed with grace and condeſcenſion in ſuch language as this, it would have overwhelmed us, and caſt us into the moſt abject deſpondency, as the outcaſts of his providence beneath his notice. We might fear he would overlook us with majeſtic diſdain, or careleſs neglect, like the little things that are called great by mortals, or as the buſy emmets of our ſpecies are apt to do. In the hurry of buſineſs they are liable to neglect, and in the power of pride and grandeur to overlook or diſdain their dependents. We ſhould be ready in hopeleſs anxiety to ſay, "Is all this earth which to us appears ſo vaſt, and which is parcelled into a thouſand mighty kingdoms, as we call them, is it all but the humble footſtool of God? hardly worthy to bear his feet? What then am I? an atom of an atom-world, a trifling individual of a trifling race. Can I expect he will take any notice of ſuch an inſignificant thing as I? The vaſt affairs of heaven and earth lie upon his hand, and he is employed in the concerns of the wide univerſe, and can he find leiſure to concern himſelf with me, and my little intereſts? Will a king, deliberating upon the concerns of nations, intereſt himſelf in favour of the worm that crawls at his footſtool? If the magnificent temple of Solomon was unworthy of the divine inhabitant, will he admit me into his preſence, and give me audience? how can I expect it?

It

It ſeems daring and preſumptuous to hope for ſuch condeſcenſion. And ſhall I then deſpair of the gracious regard of my Maker?

No, deſponding creature! mean and unworthy as thou art, hear the voice of divine condeſcenſion, as well as of Majeſty: *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite ſpirit, and that trembleth at my word.* Though God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, though he pours contempt upon princes, and ſcorns them in all their haughty glory and affected majeſty, yet there are perſons whom his gracious eye will regard. The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, that dwelleth in the high and holy place, he will look down through all the ſhining ranks of angels upon—whom? Not on the proud, the haughty and preſumptuous, but upon him *that is poor, and of a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at* his *word.* To this man will he look from the throne of his majeſty, however low, however mean he may be. This man is an object that can, as it were, attract his eyes from all the glories of the heavenly world, ſo as to regard a humble ſelf-abaſing worm. This man can never be loſt or overlooked among the multitude of creatures, but the eyes of the Lord will diſcover him in the greateſt crowd, his eyes will graciouſly fix upon this man, this particular man, though there were but one ſuch in the compaſs of the creation, or though he were baniſhed into the remoteſt corner of the univerſe, like a diamond in a heap of rubbiſh, or at the bottom of the ocean.

Do you hear this, you that are poor and contrite in ſpirit, and that tremble at his word? ye that, above all others, are moſt apt to fear you ſhall be diſregarded by him, becauſe you, of all others, are moſt deeply ſenſible how unworthy you are of his gracious notice: God, the great, the glorious, the terrible God, looks down upon you with eyes of love, and by ſo much the more affectionately, by how much the lower you are in your own eſteem. Does not your heart

ſpring

ſpring within you at the ſound? Are you not loſt in pleaſing wonder and gratitude, and crying out, "Can it be? can it be? is it indeed poſſible? is it true?" Yes, you have his own word for it, and do not think it too good news to be true, but believe, and rejoice, and give glory to his name; and fear not what men or devils can do unto you.

This, my brethren, is a matter of univerſal concern. It is the intereſt of each of us to know whether we are thus graciouſly regarded by that God on whom our very being and all our happineſs entirely depend. And how ſhall we know this? In no other way than by diſcovering whether we have the characters of that happy man to whom he condeſcends to look. Theſe are not pompous and high characters, they are not formed by earthly riches, learning, glory, and power: But *to this man will I look*, ſaith the Lord, *even to him that is poor, and of a contrite ſpirit, and* that *trembleth at my word.* Let us inquire into the import of each of the characters.

I. It is the poor man to whom the Majeſty of heaven condeſcends to look.

This does not principally refer to thoſe that are poor in this world; for, though it be very common that "the poor of this world are choſen to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," *James* ii. 5. yet this is not an univerſal rule; for many, alas! that are poor in this world are not rich towards God, nor rich in good works, and therefore ſhall famiſh through eternity in remedileſs want and wretchedneſs. But the poor here ſignifies ſuch as Chriſt characterizes more fully by the *poor in ſpirit.* Matt. v. 3. And this character implies the following ingredients:

(1.) The poor man to whom Jehovah looks is deeply ſenſible of his own inſufficiency, and that nothing but the enjoyment of God can make him happy.

The poor man feels that he is not formed ſelf-ſufficient, but a dependent upon God. He is ſenſible of the weakneſs and poverty of his nature, and that he was not

not endowed with a ſufficient ſtock of riches in his creation to ſupport him through the endleſs duration for which he is formed, or even for a ſingle day. The feeble vine does not more cloſely adhere to the elm than he to his God. He is not more ſenſible of the inſufficiency of his body to ſubſiſt without air, or the productions of the earth, than of that of his ſoul without his God, and the enjoyment of his love. In ſhort, he is reduced into his proper place in the ſyſtem of the univerſe, low and mean in compariſon with ſuperior beings of the angelic order, and eſpecially in compariſon with the great Parent and ſupport of nature. He feels himſelf to be, what he really is, a poor impotent dependent creature, that can neither live, nor move, nor exiſt without God. He is ſenſible that his *ſufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. "and that all the ſprings of his happineſs are in him."

This ſenſe of his dependence upon God is attended with a ſenſe of the inability of all earthly enjoyments to make him happy, and fill the vaſt capacities of his ſoul, which were formed for the enjoyment of an infinite good. He has a reliſh for the bleſſings of this life, but it is attended with a ſenſe of their inſufficiency, and does not exclude a ſtonger reliſh for the ſuperior pleaſures of religion. He is not a preciſe hermit, or a ſour aſcetic, on the one hand; and, on the other, he is not *a lover of pleaſure more than a lover of God.*

If he enjoys no great ſhare of the comforts of this life, he does not labour, nor ſo much as wiſh for them as his ſupreme happineſs: he is well aſſured they can never anſwer this end in their greateſt affluence. It is for God, it is for the living God, that his ſoul moſt eagerly thirſts. In the greateſt extremity he is ſenſible that the enjoyment of his love is more neceſſary to his felicity than the poſſeſſion of earthly bleſſings; nay, he is ſenſible, that if he is miſerable in the abſence of theſe, the principal cauſe is the abſence of his God. O! if he were bleſt with the perfect enjoyment of God, he

he could ſay with Habakkuk, *Though the fig-tree ſhould not bloſſom, and there ſhould be no fruit in the vine; though the labour of the olive ſhould fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the flock ſhould be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the ſtall*; though univerſal famine ſhould ſtrip me of all my earthly bleſſings, *yet I will rejoice in the Lord*, as my complete happineſs; *I will joy in the God of my ſalvation.* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

If he enjoys an affluence of earthly bleſſings, he ſtill retains a ſenſe of his need of the enjoyment of God. To be diſcontent and diſſatisfied is the common fate of the rich as well as the poor; they are ſtill craving, craving an unknown ſomething to complete their bliſs. The ſoul, being formed for the fruition of the Supreme Good, ſecretly languiſhes and pines away in the midſt of other enjoyments, without knowing its cure. It is the enjoyment of God only that can ſatisfy its unbounded deſires; but, alas! it has no reliſh for him, no thirſt after him; it is ſtill crying, "More, more of the delights of the world;" like a man in a burning fever, that calls for cold water, that will but inflame his diſeaſe, and occaſion a more painful return of thirſt. But the poor in ſpirit know where their cure lies. They do not aſk with uncertainty, *Who will ſhew us* any ſort of *good?* but their petitions centre in this, as the grand conſtituent of their happineſs, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*; and this puts more gladneſs into their hearts *than the abundance of corn and wine.* Pſalm iv. 6, 7. This was the language of the Pſalmiſt, *There is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee. My fleſh and my heart faileth; but thou art the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Pſalm lxxiii. 25, 26. And as this diſpoſition extends to all earthly things, ſo it does to all created enjoyments whatſoever, even to thoſe of the heavenly world; the poor man is ſenſible that he could not be happy even there without the enjoyment of his God. His language is, *whom have*

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I in heaven but thee? It is *beholding thy face in righteouſneſs, and awaking in thy likeneſs, that alone can ſatisfy me.* Pſalm xvii. 15.

(2.) This ſpiritual poverty implies deep humility and ſelf-abaſement.

The poor man on whom the God of heaven condeſcends to look, is mean in his own apprehenſions; he accounts himſelf not a being of mighty importance. He has no high eſteem of his own good qualities, but is little in his own eyes. He is not apt to give himſelf the preference to others, but is ready to give way to them as his ſuperiors. He has a generous ſagacity to behold their good qualities, and a commendable blindneſs towards their imperfections: but he is not quick to diſcern his own excellencies, nor ſparing to his own frailties.

Inſtead of being dazzled with the ſplendor of his own endowments or acquiſitions, he is apt to overlook them with a noble neglect, and is ſenſible of the weakneſs and defects of his nature.

And as to his gracious qualities, they appear ſmall, exceeding ſmall to him: when he conſiders how much they fall ſhort of what they ſhould be, they as it were vaniſh and ſhrink into nothing. How cold does his love appear to him in its greateſt fervour! How feeble his faith in its greateſt confidence! How ſuperficial his repentance in its greateſt depth! How proud his loweſt humility! And as for the good actions he has performed, alas! how few, how poorly done, how ſhort of his duty do they appear! After he has done all, he counts himſelf an unprofitable ſervant. After he has done all, he is more apt to adopt the language of the publican than the phariſee, *God be merciful to me a ſinner.* In his higheſt attainments he is not apt to admire himſelf; ſo far is he from it, that it is much more natural to him to fall into the oppoſite extreme, and to account himſelf the leaſt, yea, leſs than the leaſt of all other ſaints upon the face of the earth: and if he contends for any preference, it is for the loweſt

place

place in the liſt of chriſtians. This diſpoſition was remarkably exemplified in Saint Paul, who probably had made greater advancements in holineſs than any ſaint that was ever received to heaven from this guilty world.

He that is poor in ſpirit has alſo a humbling ſenſe of his own ſinfulneſs. His memory is quick to recollect his paſt ſins, and he is very ſharp-ſighted to diſcover the remaining corruptions of his heart, and the imperfections of his beſt duties. He is not ingenious to excuſe them, but views them impartially in all their deformity and aggravations. He ſincerely doubts whether there be a ſaint upon earth ſo exceeding corrupt; and, though he may be convinced that the Lord has begun a work of grace in him, and conſequently, that he is in a better ſtate than ſuch as are under the prevailing dominion of ſin, yet he really queſtions whether there be ſuch a depraved creature in the world as he ſees he has been. He is apt to count himſelf the chief of ſinners, and more indebted to free grace than any of the ſons of men. He is intimately acquainted with himſelf; but he ſees only the out-ſide of others, and hence he concludes himſelf ſo much worſe than others; hence he loathes himſelf in his own ſight for all his abominations. *Ezek.* xxxvi. 31. Self-abaſement is pleaſing to him; his humility is not forced; he does not think it a great thing for him to ſink thus low. He plainly ſees himſelf to be a mean, ſinful, exceeding ſinful creature, and therefore is ſure that it is no condeſcenſion, but the moſt reaſonable thing in the world for him to think meanly of himſelf, and to humble and abaſe himſelf. It is unnatural for one that eſteems himſelf a being of great importance to ſtoop; but it is eaſy, and appears no ſelf-denial for a poor mean creature to do ſo, who looks upon himſelf, and feels himſelf, to be ſuch.

Finally, the poor man is deeply ſenſible of his own unworthineſs. He ſees that in himſelf he deſerves no favour from God for all the good he has ever done, but

but that he may after all juſtly reject him. He makes no proud boaſts of his good heart, or good life, but falls in the duſt before God, and caſts all his dependence upon his free grace:—which leads me to obſerve,

(3.) That he who is poor in ſpirit is ſenſible of his need of the influences of divine grace to ſanctify him, and enrich him with the graces of the ſpirit.

He is ſenſible of the want of holineſs; this neceſſarily flows from his ſenſe of his corruption, and the imperfection of all his graces. Holineſs is the one thing needful with him, which he deſires and longs for above all others; and he is deeply ſenſible that he cannot work it in his own heart by his own ſtrength: he feels that without Chriſt he can do nothing, and that it is God who muſt work in him both to will and to do. Hence, like a poor man that cannot ſubſiſt upon his ſtock, he depends entirely upon the grace of God to work all his works in him, and to enable him to work out his ſalvation with fear and trembling.

(4.) He is deeply ſenſible of the abſolute neceſſity of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt for his juſtification.

He does not think himſelf rich in good works to bribe his judge, and procure acquittance, but, like a poor criminal that, having nothing to purchaſe a pardon, nothing to plead in his own defence, caſts himſelf upon the mercy of the court, he places his whole dependence upon the free grace of God through Jeſus Chriſt. He pleads his righteouſneſs only, and truſts in it alone. The rich ſcorn to be obliged; but the poor, that cannot ſubſiſt of themſelves, will cheerfully receive. So the ſelf-righteous will not ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of God, but the poor in ſpirit will cheerfully receive it.

(5.) And laſtly, the man that is poor in ſpirit is an importunate beggar at the throne of grace.

He lives upon charity; he lives upon the bounties of heaven; and, as theſe are not to be obtained without begging, he is frequently lifting up his cries to the Father of all his mercies for them. He attends

upon the ordinances of God, as Bartimeus by the way ſide, to aſk the charity of paſſengers. Prayer is the natural language of ſpiritual poverty; *The poor*, ſaith Solomon, *uſeth intreaties:* Prov. xviii. 23. whereas they that are rich in their own conceit can live without prayer, or content themſelves with the careleſs formal performance of it.

This is the habitual character of that poor man to whom the Majeſty of heaven vouchſafes the looks of his love. At times indeed he has but little ſenſe of theſe things; but then he is uneaſy, and he labours to re-obtain it, and ſometimes is actually bleſſed with it.

And is there no ſuch poor man or woman in this aſſembly? I hope there is. Where are ye poor creatures? ſtand forth, and receive the bleſſing of your Redeemer, *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit*, &c. He who has his throne in the height of heaven, and to whom this vaſt earth is but a footſtool, looks upon you with eyes of love. This ſpiritual poverty is greater riches than the treaſures of the univerſe. Be not aſhamed therefore to own yourſelves poor men, if ſuch you are. May God thus impoveriſh us all! may he ſtrip us of all our imaginary grandeur and riches, and reduce us to poor beggars at his door!

But it is time to conſider the other character of the happy man upon whom the Lord of heaven will graciouſly look; and that is,

II. Contrition of ſpirit. *To this man will I look, that is of a contrite ſpirit.*

The word *contrite* ſignifies one that is beaten or bruiſed with hard blows, or an heavy burden. And it belongs to the mourning penitent whoſe heart is broken and wounded for ſin. Sin is an intolerable burden that cruſhes and bruiſes him, and he feels himſelf pained and ſore under it. His ſtony heart, which could not be impreſſed, but rather repelled the blow, is taken away; and now he has an heart of fleſh, eaſily bruiſed and wounded. His heart is not always hard and

and ſenſeleſs, light and trifling; but it has tender ſenſations; he is eaſily ſuſceptive of ſorrow for ſin, is humbled under a ſenſe of his imperfections, and is really pained and diſtreſſed becauſe he can ſerve his God no better, but daily ſins againſt him. This character may alſo agree to the poor anxious ſoul that is broken with cruel fears of its ſtate. The ſtout-hearted can venture their eternal all upon uncertainty, and indulge pleaſing hopes without anxiouſly examining their foundation; but he that is of a contrite ſpirit is tenderly ſenſible of the importance of the matter, and cannot be eaſy without ſome good evidence of ſafety. Such ſhocking ſuppoſitions as theſe frequently ſtartle him, and pierce his very heart: "What if I ſhould be deceived at laſt? What if after all I ſhould be baniſhed from that God in whom lies all my happineſs," *&c.* Theſe are ſuppoſitions full of inſupportable terror, when they appear but barely poſſible; and much more when there ſeems to be reaſon for them. Such an habitual pious jealouſy as this, is a good ſymptom; and to your pleaſing ſurprize, ye doubtful chriſtians, I may tell you that *that* Majeſty, who you are afraid diſregards you, looks down upon you with pity. Therefore lift up your eyes to him in wonder and joyful confidence. You are not ſuch neglected things as you think. The Majeſty of heaven thinks it beneath him to look down through all the glorious orders of angels, and through interpoſing worlds, down, down even upon you in the depth of your ſelf-abhorrence. Let us,

III. Conſider the remaining character of the happy man to whom the Lord will look: *Him that trembleth at my word.*

This character implies a tender ſenſe of the great things of the word, and an heart eaſily impreſſed with them as the moſt important realities. This was remarkably exemplified in tender-hearted Joſiah. 2 Chron. xxiv. 19, 20, 27. To one that trembles at the divine word, the threatenings of it do not appear

vain

vain terrors, nor great ſwelling words of vanity, but the moſt tremendous realities. Such an one cannot bear up under them, but would tremble, and fall, and die away, if not relieved by ſome happy promiſe of deliverance. He that tembles at the word of God is not a ſtupid hearer or reader of it. It reaches and pierces his heart as a ſharp two-edged ſword; it carries power along with it, and he feels that it is the word of God, and not of men, even when it is ſpoken by feeble mortals. Thus he not only trembles at the terror, but at the authority of the word;—which leads me to obſerve farther, that he trembles with filial veneration of the majeſty of God ſpeaking in his word. He conſiders it as his voice who ſpake all things into being, and whoſe glory is ſuch, that a deep ſolemnity muſt ſeize thoſe that are admitted to hear him ſpeak.

How oppoſite is this to the temper of multitudes who regard the word of God no more than (with horror I expreſs it) the word of a child or a fool. They will have their own way, let him ſay what he will. They perſiſt in ſin, in defiance of his threatenings. They ſit as careleſs and ſtupid under his word, as though it were ſome old, dull, trifling ſtory. It ſeldom makes any impreſſions upon their ſtony hearts. Theſe are the brave, undaunted men of the world, who harden themſelves againſt the fear of futurity. But, unhappy creatures! the God of heaven diſdains to give them a gracious look, while he fixes his eyes upon the man that "is contrite, and that trembles at his word."

And where is that happy man? Where in this aſſembly, where is the contrite ſpirit? Where the man that trembleth at the word? You are all ready to catch at the character, but be not preſumptuous on the one hand, nor exceſſively timorous on the other. Inquire whether this be your prevailing character. If ſo, then claim it, and rejoice in it, though you have it not in perfection. But if you have it not prevailingly,

ly, do not ſeize it as your own. Though you have been at times diſtreſſed with a ſenſe of ſin and danger, and the word ſtrikes a terror to your hearts, yet, unleſs you are habitually of a tender and contrite ſpirit, you are not to claim the character.

But let ſuch of you as are poor and contrite in ſpirit, and that tremble at the word of the Lord, enter deeply into the meaning of this expreſſion, that the Lord looks to you. He does not look on you as a careleſs ſpectator, not concerning himſelf with you, or caring what will become of you, but he looks upon you as a father, a friend, a benefactor: his looks are efficacious for your good.

He looks upon you with acceptance. He is pleaſed with the ſight. He loves to ſee you labouring towards him. He looks upon you as the objects of his everlaſting love, and purchaſed by the blood of his Son, and he is well pleaſed with you for his righteouſneſs ſake. Hence his looking upon him that is poor, *&c.* is oppoſed to his hating the wicked and their ſacrifices, ver. 3. And is he whom you have ſo grievouſly offended, he whoſe wrath you fear above all other things, is he indeed reconciled to you, and does he delight in you? what cauſe of joy, and praiſe, and wonder is here?

Again, he looks to you ſo as to take particular notice of you. He ſees all the workings of your hearts towards him. He ſees and pities you in your honeſt, though feeble conflicts with in-dwelling ſin. He obſerves all your faithful though weak endeavours to ſerve him. His eyes pierce your very hearts, and the leaſt motion there cannot eſcape his notice. This indeed might make you tremble, if he looked upon you with the eyes of a judge, for O how many abominations muſt he ſee in you! But be of good cheer, he looks upon you with the eyes of a friend, and with that love which covers a multitude of ſins. He looks upon you with the eyes of compaſſion in all your calamities. He looks upon you to ſee that you be not overborne

overborne and cruſhed. David, who paſſed through as many hardſhips and afflictions as any of you, could ſay from happy experience, *the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.* Pſal. xxxiv. 15.

Finally, he looks to you ſo as to look after you, as we do after the ſick and weak. He looks to you ſo as to provide for you: and he will give you grace and glory, and *no good thing will be held from you.* Pſal. lxxxiv. 11.

And are you not ſafe and happy under the inſpection of a father and a friend? Let a little humble courage then animate you amid your many dejections, and confide in that care of which you feel yourſelf to be ſo unworthy.

Here it may not be amiſs to obſerve, what muſt give you no ſmall pleaſure, that thoſe very perſons who according to the eſtimate of men are the moſt likely to be overlooked, are thoſe whom God graciouſly regards. The perſons themſelves are apt to cry, "Happy I, could I believe that the God of heaven thus graciouſly regards me; but, alas! I feel myſelf a poor unworthy creature; I am a trembling broken-hearted thing, beneath the notice of ſo great a Majeſty." And art thou ſo indeed? then I may convert thy objection into an encouragement. Thou art the very perſon upon whom God looks. His eyes are running to and fro through the earth in queſt of ſuch as thou art; and he will find thee out among the innumerable multitudes of mankind. Wert thou ſurrounded with crowds of kings and nobles, his eyes would paſs by them all to fix upon thee. What a glorious artifice, if I may ſo ſpeak, is this to catch at and convert the perſon's diſcouragement as a ground of courage! to make that the character of the favourites of heaven, which they themſelves look upon as marks of his neglect of them! "Alas!" ſays the poor man, "if I was the object of divine notice, he would not ſuffer me to continue thus poor and broken-hearted."

But

But you may reaſon directly the reverſe, he makes you thus poor in ſpirit, ſenſible of your ſinfulneſs and imperfections, becauſe that he graciouſly regards you. He will not ſuffer you to be puffed up with your imaginary goodneſs, like the reſt of the world, becauſe he loves you more than he loves them.

However unaccountable this procedure ſeems, there is very good reaſon for it. The poor are the only perſons that would reliſh the enjoyment of God, and prize his love: they alone are capable of the happineſs of heaven, which conſiſts in the perfection of holineſs.

To conclude, Let us view the perfection and condeſcenſion of God as illuſtrated by this ſubject. Conſider, ye poor in ſpirit, who He is that ſtoops to look upon ſuch little things as you. It is He whoſe throne is in the higheſt heaven, ſurrounded with myriads of angels and archangels; it is He whoſe footſtool is the earth, who ſupports every creature upon it; it is He who is exalted above the bleſſing and praiſe of all the celeſtial armies, and who cannot without condeſcenſion behold the things that are done in heaven; it is He that looks down upon ſuch poor worms as you. And what a ſtoop is this?

It is he that looks upon you in particular, who looks after all the worlds he has made. He manages all the affairs of the univerſe; he takes care of every individual in his vaſt family; he provides for all his creatures, and yet he is at leiſure to regard you. He takes as particular notice of you as if you were his only creatures. What perfection is this! what an infinite graſp of thought! what unbounded power! and what condeſcenſion too!—Do but conſider what a ſmall figure you make in the univerſe of beings. You are not ſo much in compariſon with the infinite multitude of creatures in the compaſs of nature, as a grain of ſand to all the ſands upon the ſea-ſhore, or as a mote to the vaſt globe of earth; and yet he, that has the care of the whole univerſe, takes particular notice

of

of you—you who are but trifles, compared with your fellow-creatures; and who, if you were annihilated, would hardly leave a blank in the creation. Conſider this, and wonder at the condeſcenſion of God; conſider this, and acknowledge your own meanneſs; you are but nothing not only compared with God, but you are as nothing in the ſyſtem of creation.

I ſhall add but this one natural reflection: If it be ſo great a happineſs to have the great God for our patron, then what is it to be out of his favour? to be diſregarded by him? methinks an univerſal tremour may ſeize this aſſembly at the very ſuppoſition. And is there a creature in the univerſe in this wretched condition? methinks all the creation beſides muſt pity him. Where is the wretched being to be found? muſt we deſcend to hell to find him? No, alas! there are many ſuch on this earth; nay, I muſt come nearer you ſtill, there are many ſuch probably in this aſſembly: all among you are ſuch who are not poor and contrite in ſpirit, and do not tremble at the word of the Lord. And art not thou one of the miſerable number, O man? What! diſregarded by the God that made thee! not favoured with one look of love by the Author of all happineſs! He looks on thee indeed, but it is with eyes of indignation, marking thee out for vengeance; and canſt thou be eaſy in ſuch a caſe? wilt thou not labour to impoveriſh thyſelf, and have thy heart broken, that thou mayeſt become the object of his gracious regard?

SERMON

SERMON VII.

The Nature and Danger of making light of Chriſt and Salvation.

MATT. xxii. 5. *But they made light of it.*

THERE is not one of us in this aſſembly that has heard any thing, but what has heard of Chriſt and ſalvation: there is not one of us but has had the rich bleſſings of the goſpel freely and repeatedly offered to us: there is not one of us but ſtands in the moſt abſolute need of theſe bleſſings, and muſt periſh for ever without them; I wiſh I could add, there is not one of us but has cheerfully accepted them according to the offer of the goſpel. But, alas! ſuch an aſſembly is not to be expected on earth! Multitudes will make light of Chriſt and the invitations of the goſpel, as the Jews did.

This parable repreſents the great God under the majeſtic idea of a king.

He is repreſented as making a marriage-feaſt for his Son; that is, God in the goſpel offers his Son Jeſus Chriſt as a Saviour to the guilty ſons of men, and, upon their acceptance of him, the moſt intimate, endearing union, and the tendereſt mutual affection take place between Chriſt and them; which may very properly be repreſented by the marriage relation. And God has provided for them a rich variety of bleſſings, pardon, holineſs, and everlaſting felicity, which may be ſignified by a royal nuptial feaſt, verſe 2.

Theſe bleſſings were firſt offered to the Jews, who were bidden to the wedding by Moſes and the prophets, whoſe great buſineſs it was to prepare them to receive the Meſſiah, verſe 3.

The ſervants that were ſent to call them, after they were thus bidden, were the apoſtles and ſeventy diſ-

ciples, whom Chriſt ſent out to preach that the goſpel-kingdom was juſt at hand, verſe 3.

When the Jews rejected this call, he ſent forth other ſervants, namely, the apoſtles after his aſcenſion, who were to be more urgent in their invitations, and to tell them that, in conſequence of Chriſt's death, all things were now ready, verſe 4.

It is ſeldom that invitations to a royal feaſt are rejected; but, alas! the Jews rejected the invitation of the goſpel, and would not accept of its important bleſſings. They made light of Chriſt and his bleſſings; they were careleſs to them, and turned their attention to other things.

Theſe things were not peculiar to the Jews, but belong to us ſinners of the Gentiles in theſe ends of the earth. Chriſt is ſtill propoſed to us; to the ſame bleſſings we are invited; and I have the honour, my dear brethren, of appearing among you as a ſervant of the Heavenly King, ſent out to urge you to embrace the offer.

I doubt not but ſundry of you have complied; and you are enriched and made for ever.

But, alas! muſt I not entertain a godly jealouſy over ſome of you? have you not made light of Chriſt and ſalvation, to which you have been invited for ſo many years ſucceſſively?

Your caſe is really lamentable, as I hope you will ſee before I have done; and I moſt ſincerely compaſſionate you from my heart. I now riſe up in this ſolemn place with the deſign to addreſs you with the moſt awful ſerioufneſs, and the moſt compaſſionate concern; and did you know how much your happineſs may depend upon it, and how anxious I am leaſt I ſhould fail in the attempt, I am ſure you could not but pray for me, and pity me. If ever you regarded a man in the moſt ſerious temper and addreſs, I beg you would now regard what I am going to ſay to you.

You cannot receive any benefit from this, or indeed any other ſubject, till you apply it to yourſelves. And therefore,

therefore, in order to reform you of the ſin of making light of Chriſt and the goſpel, I muſt firſt inquire who are guilty of it. For this purpoſe let us conſider,

What it is to make light of Chriſt and the invitations of the goſpel.

I can think of no plainer way to diſcover this, than to inquire how we treat thoſe things that we highly eſteem; and alſo, by way of contraſt, how we treat thoſe things which we make light of; and hence we may diſcover whether Chriſt and the goſpel may be ranked among the things we eſteem, or thoſe we diſregard.

I. Men are apt to remember and affectionately think of the things that they highly eſteem; but as for thoſe which they diſregard, they can eaſily forget them, and live from day to day without a ſingle thought about them.

Now do you often affectionately remember the Lord Jeſus, and do your thoughts often go after him? do they pay him early viſits in the morning? do they make frequent excurſions to him through the day? and do you lie down with him in your hearts at night? Is not the contrary evident as to many of you? Can you not live from day to day thoughtleſs of Jeſus, and your everlaſting ſalvation? Recollect now, how many affectionate thoughts have you had of theſe things through the week paſt, or in this ſacred morning. And can you indeed highly eſteem thoſe things which you hardly ever think of? Follow your own hearts, Sirs; obſerve which way they moſt naturally and freely run, and then judge whether you make light of the goſpel or not. Alas! we cannot perſuade men to one hour's ſerious conſideration what they ſhould do for an intereſt in Chriſt; we cannot perſuade them ſo much as to afford him only their thoughts, which are ſuch cheap things; and yet they will not be convinced that they make light of Chriſt. And here lies the infatuation of ſin; it blinds and befools men, ſo that they do not know what they think of, what they love, or what

what they intend, much leſs do they know the habitual bent of their ſouls. They often imagine themſelves free from thoſe ſins to which they are moſt enſlaved, and particularly they think themſelves innocent of the crime of making light of the goſpel, when this is the very crime that is likely to deſtroy them for ever.

II. The things that men value, if of ſuch a nature as to admit of publication, will be the frequent ſubjects of their diſcourſe: the thoughts will command the tongue, and furniſh materials for converſation. But thoſe things that they forget and diſregard they will not talk of.

Do not they therefore make light of Chriſt and ſalvation, who have no delight in converſing about them, and hardly ever mention the name of Chriſt but in a trifling or prophane manner? They do not like the company where divine things are diſcourſed of, but think it preciſe and troubleſome. They had much rather be entertained with humourous tales and idle ſtories, or talk about the affairs of the world. *They are of the world*, ſays St. John, *therefore ſpeak they of the world, and the world heareth them.* 1 John iv. 5. They are in their element in ſuch converſation. Or others may talk about religion; but it is only about the circumſtances of it, as, "How ſuch a man preached; it was a very good or a bad ſermon," *&c.* but they care not to enter into the ſpirit and ſubſtance of divine things; and if they ſpeak of Chriſt and experimental religion, it is in an heartleſs, inſipid manner. And do not ſuch make light of the goſpel? and is not this the character of many of you?

III. Men make light of thoſe things, if they are of a practical nature which they only talk about, but do not reduce into practice.

Chriſtianity was intended not to furniſh matter for empty talkers, but to govern the heart and practice. But are there not ſome that only employ their tongues about it, eſpecially when their ſpirits are raiſed with liquor,

liquor, and then a torrent of noiſy religion breaks from them. Watch their lives, and you will ſee little appearance of chriſtianity there. And do not theſe evidently make light of Chriſt, who make him the theme of their drunken converſation, or who ſeem to think that God ſent his Son from heaven juſt to ſet the world a talking about him? There is nothing in nature that ſeems to me more abominable than this.

IV. We take the utmoſt pains and labour to ſecure the things we value, and cannot be eaſy while our property in them is uncertain; but thoſe things that we think lightly of we care but little whether they be ours or not.

Therefore, have not ſuch of you made light of Chriſt and ſalvation, who have lived twenty or thirty years uncertain whether you have an intereſt in them, and yet have been eaſy and contented, and take no method to be reſolved? Are all that hear me this day determined in this important queſtion, "What ſhall become of me when I die?" Are you all certain upon good grounds, and after a thorough trial, that you ſhall be ſaved? O that you were! but, alas! you know you are not. And do you think you would bear this uncertainty about it, if you did not make light of ſalvation? No; you would carefully examine yourſelves; you would diligently peruſe the ſcriptures to find out the marks of thoſe that ſhall be ſaved; you would anxiouſly conſult thoſe that could direct you, and particularly pious miniſters, who would think it the greateſt favour you could do them to devolve ſuch an office upon them. But now miniſters may ſit in their ſtudies for a whole year, and not ten perſons perhaps in five hundred agreeably intrude upon them on this moſt important buſineſs.

O, Sirs, if the goſpel ſhould pierce your hearts indeed, you could not but cry out with the convicted Jews, *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do to be ſaved?* Acts ii. 37. Paul, when awakened, cries out, in a trembling conſternation, *Lord! what wilt thou have*

me

me to do? But when ſhall we hear ſuch queſtions now-a-days?

V. The things that men highly eſteem, deeply and tenderly affect them, and excite ſome motions in their hearts; but what they make light of, makes no impreſſion upon them.

And if you did not make light of the goſpel, what workings would there be in your hearts about it? what ſolemn, tender, and vigorous paſſions would it raiſe in you to hear ſuch things about the world to come! what ſorrows would burſt from your hearts at the diſcovery of your ſins! what fear and aſtoniſhment would ſeize you at the conſideration of your miſery! what tranſports of joy and gratitude would you feel at the glad tidings of ſalvation by the blood of Chriſt! what ſtrong efficacious purpoſes would be raiſed in you at the diſcovery of your duty! O what hearers ſhould we have, were it not for this one ſin, the making light of the goſpel! whereas now we are in danger of wearying them, or preaching them aſleep with our moſt ſolemn diſcourſes about this momentous affair. We talk to them of Chriſt and ſalvation till they grow quite tired of this dull old tale, and this fooliſhneſs of preaching. Alas! little would one think, from the air of careleſſneſs, levity, and inattention that appears among them, that they were hearing ſuch weighty truths, or have any concern in them.

VI. Our eſtimate of things may be diſcovered by the diligence and earneſtneſs of our endeavours about them. Thoſe things which we highly value, we think no pains too great to obtain; but what we think lightly of we uſe no endeavours about, or we uſe them in a languid careleſs manner.

And do not they make light of Chriſt and ſalvation, who do not exert themſelves in earneſt to obtain them, and think a great deal of every little thing they do in religion? they are ſtill ready to cry out, "What need of ſo much pains? we hope to be ſaved without ſo much trouble." And, though theſe may not be

ſo

ſo honeſt as to ſpeak it out, it is plain from their temper and practice, they grudge all the ſervice they do for Chriſt, as done to a maſter they do not love. They love and eſteem the world, and therefore for the world they will labour and toil all day, and ſeem never to think they can do too much: but for the God that made them, for the Lord that bought them, and for their everlaſting ſalvation, they ſeem afraid of taking too much pains. Let us preach to them as long as we will, we cannot bring them in earneſt to deſire and purſue after holineſs. Follow them to their houſes, and you will hardly ever find them reading a chapter in their Bibles, or calling upon God with their families, ſo much as once a day. Follow them into their retirements, and you will hear no penitent confeſſions of ſin, no earneſt cries for mercy. They will not allow to God that one day in ſeven which he has appropriated to his own immediate ſervice, but they will ſteal and proſtitute ſome even of thoſe ſacred hours for idleneſs, or worldly converſation, or buſineſs. And many of them are ſo malignant in wickedneſs, that they will reproach and ridicule others that are not ſo made as themſelves in theſe reſpects. And is not Chriſt worth ſeeking? Is not eternal ſalvation worth ſo much trouble? does not that man make light of theſe things that thinks his eaſe or carnal pleaſure of greater importance? Let common ſenſe judge.

VII. That which we highly value we think we cannot buy too dear; and we are ready to part with every thing that comes in competition with it. The merchant that found one pearl of great price, ſold all that he had to purchaſe it, *Matt.* xiii. 46. but thoſe things that we make light of, we will not part with things of value for them.

Now, when Chriſt and the bleſſings of the goſpel come in competition with the world and ſinful pleaſures, you may know which you moſt highly eſteem, by conſidering which you are moſt ready to part with. You are called to part with every thing that is inconſiſtent

ſiſtent with an intereſt in Chriſt, and yet many of you will not do it. You are called but to give God his own, to reſign all to his will, to let go all thoſe profits and pleaſures which you muſt either part with, or part with Chriſt, and yet your hearts cling to theſe things, you graſp them eagerly, and nothing can tear them from you. You muſt have your pleaſures, you muſt keep your credit in the world, you muſt look to your eſtates, whatever becomes of Chriſt and ſalvation; as if you could live and die better without Chriſt than without theſe things; or as if Chriſt could not make you happy without them. And does not this bring the matter to an iſſue, and plainly ſhew that you make light of Chriſt in compariſon with theſe things? Chriſt himſelf has aſſured you, over and over, that unleſs you are willing to part with all for his ſake, you cannot be his diſciples; and yet, while you have the quite contrary diſpoſition, you will pretend to be his diſciples; as if you knew better what it is that conſtituted his diſciples than he.

VIII. Thoſe things which we highly value, we ſhall be for helping our friends to obtain.

Do not thoſe, then, make light of Chriſt who do not take half ſo much pains to help their children to an intereſt in him, as to ſet them up in credit in the world, and leave them large fortunes? They ſupply the outward wants of their families, but they take little or no care about their everlaſting ſalvation.—Alas! Sirs, the neglected, ignorant, and vicious children and ſervants of ſuch of you can witneſs againſt you, that you make very light of Chriſt and ſalvation, and their immortal ſouls.

IX. That which men highly eſteem they will ſo diligently purſue, that you may ſee their regard for it in their endeavours after it, if it be a matter within their reach.

You may therefore ſee that many make light of the goſpel by the little knowledge they have of it, after all the means of inſtruction with which they have

have been favoured. Alas! where is their improvement in holineſs! how little do they know of their own hearts, of God and Chriſt, and the world to come, and what they muſt do to be ſaved! Aſk them about theſe things, and you will find them ſtupidly ignorant; and yet they have ſo much conceited knowledge that they will not acknowledge it; or if they do, they have no better excuſe than to ſay they are no ſcholars, or they have a poor memory; as if it required extenſive learning, or a great genius to know the things that are neceſſary to ſalvation. O! if they had not made light of theſe things; if they had beſtowed but half the pains upon them which they have taken to underſtand matters of trade and worldly buſineſs, they would not be ſo groſsly ignorant as they are? When men that can learn the hardeſt trade in a few years, when men of bright parts, and perhaps conſiderable learning, after living ſo many years, are ſtill mere novices in matters of religion, and do not ſo much as know the terms of life according to the goſpel, is it not plain that they care but little about theſe things, and that they make light of the Son of God, and all his ineſtimable immortal bleſſings?

Thus I have offered you ſufficient matter of conviction in this affair. And what is the reſult? does not conſcience ſmite ſome of you by this time, and ſay, "I am the man that have made light of Chriſt and his goſpel?" If not, upon what evidence are you acquitted? Some of you, I doubt not, can ſay, in the integrity of your hearts, "Alas! I am too careleſs about this important affair, but God knows I am often deeply concerned about it; God knows that if ever I was in earneſt about any thing in all my life, it has been about my everlaſting ſtate; and there is nothing in all the world that habitually lies ſo near my heart." But are there not ſome of you whom conſcience does not accuſe of this crime of too much careleſſneſs about the goſpel, not becauſe you are innocent, but becauſe you make ſo very light of it, that you

will make no thorough ſearch into it? and does not this alone prove you guilty? I beſeech ſuch to conſider the folly of your conduct. Do you then think to excuſe your crime, by being careleſs whether you are guilty of it or not? Can you avoid the precipice by ſhutting your eyes? If you diſcover your ſin now, it may be of unſpeakable ſervice, but if you now ſhut your eyes you muſt ſee it hereafter, when it will be too late; when your conviction will be your puniſhment. I beſeech you alſo to conſider the dreadful evil of your conduct in making light of a Saviour. And here I ſhall offer ſuch arguments to expoſe its aggravations as I am ſure cannot fail to convince and aſtoniſh you, if you act like men of reaſon and underſtanding.

I. Conſider you make light of him who did not make light of you, when you deſerved his final neglect of you. You were worthy of nothing but contempt and abhorrence from him. As a man you are but a worm to God, and as a ſinner you are viler than a toad or a ſerpent. Yet Chriſt was ſo far from making light of you, that he left his native heaven, became a man of ſorrows, and died in the moſt exquiſite agonies, that a way might be opened for the ſalvation of your miſerable ſoul: and can you make light of him after all his regard to you? What miracles of love and mercy has he ſhewn towards you, and can you neglect him after all? Angels, who are leſs concerned in theſe things than we, cannot but pry into them with delightful wonder, 1 *Peter* i. 12. and ſhall ſinners, who have the moſt intimate perſonal concern in them, make light of them? This is a crime more than deviliſh; for the devils never had a Saviour offered to them, and conſequently never could deſpiſe him. And can you live in a careleſſneſs of Chriſt all your days, and yet feel no remorſe?

II. Conſider you make light of matters of the greateſt excellency and importance in all the world. O, Sirs, you know not what it is that you ſlight; had you known theſe things you would not have ventured

to

to make light of them for ten thouſand worlds. As Chriſt ſaid to the woman of Samaria, *If thou hadſt known the gift of God, and who it is that ſpeaketh to thee, thou wouldeſt have aſked of him living water.* John iv. 13. *Had* the Jews *known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.* 1 Cor. ii. 8. So had you known what Jeſus is, you would not have made light of him; he would have been to you the moſt important being in the univerſe. O had you been but one day in heaven, and ſeen and felt the happineſs there! or had you been one hour under the agonies of hell, you could never more have trifled with ſalvation.

Here I find my thoughts run ſo naturally into the ſame channel with thoſe of the excellent Mr. Baxter, about a hundred years ago, that you will allow me to give a long quotation from him, that you may ſee in what light this great and good man viewed the neglected things which the goſpel brings to your ears. His words are theſe; and I am ſure to me they have been very weighty:—"O, Sirs, they are no trifles or jeſting matters that the goſpel ſpeaks of. I muſt needs profeſs to you that when I have the moſt ſerious thoughts of theſe things, I am ready to wonder that ſuch amazing matters do not overwhelm the ſouls of men: that the greatneſs of the ſubject doth not ſo overmatch our underſtandings and affections, as even to drive men beſide themſelves, but that God hath always ſomewhat allayed it by diſtance; much more do I wonder that men ſhould be ſo blockiſh as to make light of ſuch things. O Lord, that men did but know what everlaſting glory and everlaſting torments are! would they then hear us as they do? would they read and think of theſe things as they do? I profeſs I have been ready to wonder when I have heard ſuch weighty things delivered, how people can forbear crying out in the congregation, and much more do I wonder how they can reſt, till they have gone to their miniſters and learned what they ſhall do to be ſaved, that this great buſineſs ſhould be put out of doubt.

O that

and have been baptized into this faith; for you, I ſay, to make light of them, how aſtoniſhing! how utterly inexcuſable! What! believe that you ſhall live for ever in the moſt perfect happineſs or exquiſite miſery, and yet take no more pains to obtain the one, and eſcape the other? What! believe that the great and dreadful God will ſhortly be your judge, and yet make no more preparation for it? Either ſay plainly, "I am no chriſtian, I do not believe theſe things;" or elſe let your hearts be affected with your belief, and let it influence and govern your lives.

V. Conſider what thoſe things are which engroſs your affections, and which tempt you to neglect Chriſt and your ſalvation. Have you found out a better friend, or a more ſubſtantial and laſting happineſs than his ſalvation? O! what trifles and vanities, what dreams and ſhadows are men purſuing, while they neglect the important realities of the eternal world! If crowns and kingdoms, if all the riches, glories, and pleaſures of the world were inſured to you as a reward for making light of Chriſt, you would even then make the moſt fooliſh bargain poſſible; for what are theſe in the ſcale to eternal joy or eternal tempeſt? and *what ſhall it profit a man if he gain* even *the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?* Matt. xvi. 26. But you cannot hope for the ten thouſandth part; and will you caſt away your ſouls for this? You that think it ſuch a great thing to live in riches, pleaſures, and honours, conſider, is it ſuch a mighty happineſs to die rich? to die after a life of pleaſure and honour? Will it be ſuch a great happineſs to give an account for the life of a rich ſenſualiſt, rather than of a poor mortified creature? Will Dives then be ſo much happier than Lazarus? Alas! what does the richeſt, the higheſt, the moſt voluptuous ſinner, what does he do, but lay up treaſures of wrath againſt the day of wrath? O how will the unhappy creatures torture themſelves for ever with the moſt cutting reflections for ſelling their Saviour and their ſouls for ſuch trifles! Let your ſins and

and earthly enjoyments ſave you then, if they can; let them then do that for you which Chriſt would have done for you if you had choſen him. Then go and cry to the gods you have choſen: let them deliver you in the day of your tribulation.

VI. Your making light of Chriſt and ſalvation is a certain evidence that you have no intereſt in them.—Chriſt will not throw himſelf and his bleſſings away upon thoſe that do not value them. "Thoſe that honour him he will honour; but they that deſpiſe him ſhall be lightly eſteemed." 1 Sam. ii. 30. There is a day coming, when you will feel you cannot do without him; when you will feel yourſelves periſhing for want of a Saviour; and then you may go and look for a Saviour where you will; then you may ſhift for yourſelves as you can; he will have nothing to do with you; the Saviour of Sinners will caſt you off for ever. I tell you, Sirs, whatever eſtimate you form of theſe things, God thinks very highly of the blood of his Son, and the bleſſings of his purchaſe; and if ever you obtain them, he will have you think highly of them too. If you continue to make light of them, all the world cannot ſave you. And can you find fault with God for denying you that which was ſo little in your account.

VII. And laſtly, the time is haſtening when you will not think ſo ſlightly of Chriſt and ſalvation. O, Sirs, when God ſhall commiſſion death to tear your guilty ſouls out of your bodies, when devils ſhall drag you away to the place of torment, when you find yourſelves condemned to everlaſting fire by that Saviour whom you now neglect, what would you then give for a Saviour? When divine juſtice brings in its heavy charges againſt you, and you have nothing to anſwer, how will you then cry, "O if I had choſen Jeſus for my Saviour, he would have anſwered all!" When you ſee that the world has deſerted you, that your companions in ſin have deceived themſelves and you, and all your merry days are over for ever, would you

you not then give ten thouſand worlds for Chriſt? And will you not now think him worthy of your eſteem and earneſt purſuit? Why will ye judge of things now quite the reverſe of what you will do then, when you will be more capable of judging rightly?

And now, dear immortal ſouls! I have diſcovered the nature and danger of this common but unſuſpected and unlamented ſin, making light of Chriſt. I have delivered my meſſage, and now I muſt leave it with you, imploring the bleſſing of God upon it. I cannot follow you home to your houſes to ſee what effect it has upon you, or to make application of it to each of you in particular; but, O may your conſciences undertake this office! Whenever you ſpend another prayerleſs, thoughtleſs day, whenever you give yourſelves up to ſinful pleaſures, or an over-eager purſuit of the world, may your conſcience become your preacher, and ſting you with this expoſtulation: "Alas! is this the effect of all I have heard? Do I ſtill make light of Chriſt and the concerns of religion? O what will be the end of ſuch a conduct!"

I cannot but fear after all, that ſome of you, as uſual, will continue careleſs and impenitent. Well, when you are ſuffering the puniſhment of this ſin in hell, remember that you were warned, and acquit me from being acceſſary to your ruin. And when we all appear before the ſupreme Judge, and I am called to give an account of my miniſtry; when I am aſked, "Did you warn theſe creatures of their danger? Did you lay before them their guilt in making light of theſe things?" you will allow me to anſwer, "Yes, Lord, I warned them in the beſt manner I could, but they would not believe me; they would not regard what I ſaid, though enforced by the authority of thy awful name, and confirmed by thine own word." O! Sirs, muſt I give in this accuſation againſt any of you? No, rather have mercy upon yourſelves, and have mercy upon me, that I may give an account of you with joy, and not with grief.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

The Compaſſion of Chriſt to weak Believers.

MATT. xii. 20. *A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and ſmoking flax ſhall he not quench.*

THE Lord Jeſus poſſeſſes all thoſe virtues in the higheſt perfection, which render him infinitely amiable, and qualify him for the adminiſtration of a juſt and gracious government over the world. The virtues of mortals, when carried to a high degree, very often run into thoſe vices which have a kind of affinity to them. "Right too rigid hardens into wrong." Strict juſtice ſteels itſelf into exceſſive ſeverity; and the man is loſt in the judge. Goodneſs and mercy ſometimes degenerate into ſoftneſs and an irrational compaſſion inconſiſtent with government. But in Jeſus Chriſt theſe ſeemingly oppoſite virtues center and harmonize in the higheſt perfection, without running into extremes. Hence he is at once characterized as a Lamb, and as the Lion of the tribe of Judah: a Lamb for gentleneſs towards humble penitents, and a Lion to tear his enemies in pieces. Chriſt is ſaid to *judge and make war*, Rev. xix. 11. and yet he is called *The Prince of Peace.* Iſa. ix. 6. He will at length ſhew himſelf terrible to the workers of iniquity; and the terrors of the Lord are a very proper topic whence to perſuade men; but now he is patient towards all men, and he is all love and tenderneſs towards the meaneſt penitent. The meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt is to be the pleaſing entertainment of this day; and I enter upon it with a particular view to thoſe mourning deſponding ſouls among us, whoſe weakneſs renders them in great need of ſtrong conſolation. To ſuch in particular I addreſs the words of my text,

A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and ſmoking flax ſhall he not quench.

This is a part of the Redeemer's character, as delineated near three thouſand years ago by the evangelical prophet Iſaiah, Iſa. xlii. 1—4. and it is expreſsly applied to him by St. Matthew: *Behold*, ſays the Father, *my ſervant whom I have choſen* for the important undertaking of ſaving the guilty ſons of men; "my beloved, in whom my ſoul is well pleaſed;" my very ſoul is well pleaſed with his faithful diſcharge of the important office he has undertaken. *I will put my ſpirit upon him*; that is, I will completely furniſh him by the gifts of my ſpirit for his high character; and *he ſhall ſhew judgment to the Gentiles*: to the poor benighted Gentiles he ſhall ſhew the light of ſalvation; by revealing the goſpel to them; which, in the ſtile of the Old Teſtament, may be called his judgments. Or he will ſhew and execute the judgment of this world by caſting out its infernal prince, who had ſo long exerciſed an extenſive cruel tyranny over it. *He ſhall not ſtrive nor cry, neither ſhall any man hear his voice in the ſtreets*; that is, though he enters the world as a mighty prince and conqueror to eſtabliſh a kingdom of righteouſneſs, and overthrow the kingdom of darkneſs, yet he will not introduce it with the noiſy terrors and thunders of war, but ſhall ſhew himſelf mild and gentle as the prince of peace. Or the connection may lead us to underſtand theſe words in a different ſenſe, namely, He ſhall do nothing with clamorous oſtentation, nor proclaim his wonderful works, when it ſhall anſwer no valuable end. Accordingly the verſe of our text ſtands thus connected: *Great multitudes followed him; and he healed them all, and charged them that they ſhould not make him known. That it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken by Iſaiah the prophet, ſaying,—He ſhall not cry, neither ſhall any man hear his voice in the ſtreets*; that is, he ſhall not publiſh his miracles with noiſy triumph in the ſtreets, and other public places. And when it is ſaid, *He ſhall not ſtrive*, it may refer

to

to his inoffenſive paſſive behaviour towards his enemies that were plotting his death. For thus we may connect this quotation from Iſaiah with the preceding hiſtory in the chapter of our text: *Then the Phariſees went out, and held a council againſt him, how they might deſtroy him. But when Jeſus knew it*, inſtead of praying to his Father for a guard of angels, or employing his own miraculous power to deſtroy them, *he withdrew himſelf from thence;—that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken by the prophet Iſaiah, ſaying,—He ſhall not ſtrive.*

The general meaning of my text ſeems to be contained in this obſervation: "That the Lord Jeſus has the tendereſt and moſt compaſſionate regard to the feebleſt penitent, however oppreſſed and deſponding; and that he will approve and cheriſh the leaſt ſpark of true love towards himſelf.

The bruiſed reed ſeems naturally to repreſent a ſoul at once feeble in itſelf, and cruſhed with a burden; a ſoul both weak and oppreſſed. The reed is a ſlender frail vegetable in itſelf, and therefore a very proper image to repreſent a ſoul that is feeble and weak. A bruiſed reed is ſtill more frail, hangs its head, and is unable to ſtand without ſome prop. And what can be a more lively emblem of a poor ſoul, not only weak in itſelf, but bowed down and broken under a load of ſin and ſorrow, that doops and ſinks, and is unable to ſtand without divine ſupport? Strength may bear up under a burden, or ſtruggle with it, till it has thrown it off; but oppreſſed weakneſs, frailty under a burden, what can be more pitiable? and yet this is the caſe of many a poor penitent. He is weak in himſelf, and in the mean time cruſhed under an heavy weight of guilt and diſtreſs.

And what would become of ſuch a frail oppreſſed creature, if, inſtead of raiſing him up and ſupporting him, Jeſus ſhould tread and cruſh him under the foot of his indignation? But though a reed, eſpecially a bruiſed reed, is an inſignificant thing, of little or no

uſe,

uſe, yet "a bruiſed reed he will not break," but he raiſes it up with a gentle hand, and enables it to ſtand, though weak in itſelf, and eaſily cruſhed in ruin.

Perhaps the imagery, when drawn at length, may be this: "The Lord Jeſus is an almighty conqueror, marches in ſtate through our world; and here and there a bruiſed reed lies in his way. But inſtead of diſregarding it, or trampling it under foot, he takes care not to break it: he raiſes up the drooping ſtraw, trifling as it is, and ſupports it with his gentle hand." Thus, poor broken-hearted penitents, thus he takes care of you, and ſupports you, worthleſs and trifling as you are. Though you ſeem to lie in the way of his juſtice, and it might tread you with its heavy foot, yet he not only does not cruſh you, but takes you up, and inſpires you with ſtrength to bear your burden, and flouriſh again.

Or perhaps the imagery may be derived from the practice of the ancient ſhepherds, who were wont to amuſe themſelves with the muſic of a pipe of reed or ſtraw; and when it was bruiſed they broke it, or threw it away as uſeleſs. But the bruiſed reed ſhall not be broken by this divine Shepherd of ſouls. The muſic of broken ſighs and groans is indeed all that the broken reed can afford him: the notes are but low, melancholy, and jarring: and yet he will not break the inſtrument, but he will repair and tune it, till it is fit to join in the concert of angels on high; and even now its humble ſtrains are pleaſing to his ears. Surely every broken heart among us muſt revive, while contemplating this tender and moving imagery!

The other emblem is equally ſignificant and affecting. *The ſmoking flax ſhall he not quench.* It ſeems to be an alluſion to the wick of a candle or lamp, the flame of which is put out, but it ſtill ſmokes, and retains a little fire, which may again be blown into a flame, or rekindled by the application of more fire. Many ſuch dying ſnuffs or ſmoking wicks are to be found in the candleſticks of the churches, and in the lamps

lamps of the ſanctuary. The flame of divine love is juſt expiring, it is ſunk into the ſocket of a corrupt heart, and produces no clear ſteady blaze, but only a ſmoke that is diſagreeable, although it ſhews that a ſpark of the ſacred fire ſtill remains; or it produces a faint quivering flame that dies away, then catches and revives, and ſeems unwilling to be quenched entirely. The devil and the world raiſe many ſtorms of temptation to blow it out; and a corrupt heart, like a fountain, pours out water to quench it. But even this ſmoking flax, this dying ſnuff, Jeſus will not quench, but he blows it up into a flame, and pours in the oil of his grace to recruit and nouriſh it. He walks among the golden candleſticks, and trims the lamps of his ſanctuary. Where he finds empty veſſels without oil or a ſpark of heavenly fire, like thoſe of the fooliſh virgins, he breaks the veſſels, or throws them out of his houſe. But where he finds the leaſt ſpark of true grace, where he diſcovers but the glimpſe of ſincere love to him, where he ſees the principle of true piety, which, though juſt expiring, yet renders the heart ſuſceptive of divine love, as a candle juſt put out is eaſily rekindled, there he will ſtrengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die: he will blow up the dying ſnuff to a lively flame, and cauſe it to ſhine brighter and brighter to the perfect day. Where there is the leaſt principle of true holineſs he will cheriſh it. He will furniſh the expiring lamp with freſh ſupplies of the oil of grace, and of heavenly fire; and all the ſtorms that beat upon it ſhall not be able to put it out, becauſe ſheltered by his hand.

I hope, my dear brethren, ſome of you begin already to feel the pleaſing energy of this text. Are you not ready to ſay, "Bleſſed Jeſus! is this thy true character? Then thou art juſt ſuch a Saviour as I want, and I moſt willingly give up myſelf to thee." You are ſenſible you are at beſt but a bruiſed reed, a feeble, ſhattered, uſeleſs thing; an untuneable, broken pipe

of

of ſtraw, that can make no proper muſic for the entertainment of your divine ſhepherd. Your heart is at beſt but ſmoking flax, where the love of God often appears like a dying ſnuff; or an expiring flame that quivers and catches, and hovers over the lamp, juſt ready to go out. Such ſome of you probably feel yourſelves to be. Well, and what think ye of Chriſt? "He will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoking flax;" and therefore, may not even your guilty eyes look to this gentle Saviour with encouraging hope? May you not ſay to him, with the ſweet ſinger of Iſrael, in his laſt moments, *He is all my ſalvation, and all my deſire.* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

In proſecuting this ſubject I intend to illuſtrate the character of a weak believer, as repreſented in my text, and then to illuſtrate the care and compaſſion of Jeſus Chriſt even for ſuch a poor weakling.

I. I am to illuſtrate the character of a weak believer as repreſented in my text by "a bruiſed reed, and ſmoking flax."

The metaphor of a bruiſed reed, as I obſerved, ſeems moſt naturally to convey the idea of a ſtate of weakneſs and oppreſſion. And therefore in illuſtrating it I am naturally led to deſcribe the various weakneſſes which a believer ſometimes painfully feels, and to point out the heavy burdens which he ſometimes groans under; I ſay, ſometimes, for at other times even the weak believer finds himſelf ſtrong, *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and ſtrengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.* The joy of the Lord is his ſtrength; and he "can do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening him." Even the oppreſſed believer at times feels himſelf delivered from his burden, and he can lift up his drooping head, and walk upright. But, alas! the burden returns, and cruſhes him again. And under ſome burden or other many honeſt-hearted believers groan out the moſt part of their lives.

Let

Let us now ſee what are thoſe weakneſſes which a believer feels and laments. He finds himſelf weak in knowledge; a ſimple child in the knowledge of God and divine things. He is weak in love; the ſacred flame does not riſe with a perpetual fervor, and diffuſe itſelf through all his devotions, but at times it languiſhes and dies away into a ſmoking ſnuff. He is weak in faith; he cannot keep a ſtrong hold of the Almighty, cannot ſuſpend his all upon his promiſes with cheerful confidence, nor build a firm immoveable fabric of hope upon the rock Jeſus Chriſt. He is weak in hope; his hope is daſhed with riſing billows of fears and jealouſies, and ſometimes juſt overſet. He is weak in joy; he cannot extract the ſweets of chriſtianity, nor taſte the comforts of his religion. He is weak in zeal for God and the intereſts of his kingdom; he would wiſh himſelf always a flaming ſeraph, always glowing with zeal, always unwearied in ſerving his God, and promoting the deſigns of redeeming love in the world; but, alas! at times his zeal, with his love, languiſhes and dies away into a ſmoking ſnuff. He is weak in repentance; troubled with that plague of plagues, an hard heart. He is weak in the conflict with indwelling ſin, that is perpetually making inſurrections within him. He is weak in reſiſting temptations; which crowd upon him from without, and are often likely to overwhelm him. He is weak in courage to encounter the king of terrors, and venture through the valley of the ſhadow of death. He is weak in prayer, in importunity, in filial boldneſs in approaching the mercy-ſeat. He is weak in abilities to endeavour the converſion of ſinners, and ſave ſouls from death. In ſhort, he is weak in every thing in which he ſhould be ſtrong. He has indeed, like the church of Philadelphia, a little ſtrength; Rev. iii. 8. and at times he feels it; but O! it ſeems to him much too little for the work he has to do. Theſe weakneſſes or defects the believer feels, painfully and tenderly feels, and bitterly laments. A ſenſe of them keeps him

him upon his guard againſt temptations: he is not ventureſome in ruſhing into the combat. He would not parley with temptation, but would keep out of its way; nor would he run the riſk of a defeat by an oſtentatious experiment of his ſtrength. This ſenſe of weakneſs alſo keeps him dependent upon divine ſtrength. He clings to that ſupport given to St. Paul in an hour of hard conflict, *My grace is ſufficient for thee; for my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs*; and when a ſenſe of his weakneſs has this happy effect upon him, then with St. Paul he has reaſon to ſay, *When I am weak, then am I ſtrong*. 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

I ſay the believer feels and laments theſe weakneſſes; and this is the grand diſtinction in this caſe between him and the reſt of the world. They are weak too; much weaker than he; nay, they have, properly, no ſpiritual ſtrength at all; but, alas! they do not feel their weakneſs, but the poor vain creatures boaſt of their ſtrength, and think they can do great things when they are diſpoſed for them. Or if their repeated falls and defeats by temptation extort them to a confeſſion of their weakneſs, they plead it rather as an excuſe, than lament it as at once a crime and a calamity. But the poor believer tries no ſuch artifice to extenuate his guilt. He is ſenſible that even his weakneſs itſelf has guilt in it, and therefore he laments it with ingenuous ſorrows among his other ſins.

Now, have I not delineated the very character of ſome of you? ſuch weaklings, ſuch frail reeds you feel yourſelves to be. Well, hear this kind aſſurance, "Jeſus will not break ſuch a feeble reed, but he will ſupport and ſtrengthen it."

But you perhaps not only feel you are weak, but you are oppreſſed with ſome heavy burden or other. You are not only a reed for weakneſs, but you are a bruiſed reed, trodden under foot, cruſhed under a load. Even this is no unuſual or diſcouraging caſe; for,

The weak believer often feels himſelf cruſhed under ſome heavy burden. The frail reed is often bruiſed; bruiſed

bruiſed under a due ſenſe of guilt. Guilt lies heavy at times upon his conſcience, and he cannot throw it off. Bruiſed with a ſenſe of remaining ſin, which he finds ſtill ſtrong within him, and which at times prevails, and treads him under foot. Bruiſed under a burden of wants, the want of tenderneſs of heart, of ardent love to God and mankind, the want of heavenly-mindedneſs and victory over the world; the want of conduct and reſolution to direct his behaviour in a paſſage ſo intricate and difficult, and the want of nearer intercourſe with the Father and his ſpirit: in ſhort, a thouſand preſſing wants cruſh and bruiſe him. He alſo feels his ſhare of the calamities of life in common with other men. But theſe burdens I ſhall take no farther notice of, becauſe they are not peculiar to him as a believer, nor do they lie heavieſt upon his heart. He could eaſily bear up under all the calamities of life if his ſpiritual wants were ſupplied, and the burden of guilt and ſin were removed. Under theſe laſt he groans and ſinks. Indeed theſe burdens lie with all their full weight upon the world around him; but they are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and feel them not: they do not groan under them, nor labour for deliverance from them. They lie contented under them, with more ſtupidity than beaſts of burden, till they ſink under the intolerable load into the depth of miſery. But the poor believer is not ſo ſtupid, and his tender heart feels the burden, and groans under it. *We that are in this tabernacle*, ſays St. Paul, *do groan, being burdened.* 2 Cor. v. 4. The believer underſtands feelingly that pathetic exclamation, *O wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. He cannot be eaſy till his conſcience is appeaſed by a well-atteſted pardon through the blood of Chriſt; and the ſins he feels working within him are a real burden and uneaſineſs to him, though they ſhould never break out into action, and publicly diſhonour his holy profeſſion.

And is not this the very character of ſome poor oppreſſed creatures among you? I hope it is. You may look upon your caſe to be very diſcouraging, but Jeſus looks upon it in a more favourable light; he looks upon you as proper objects of his compaſſionate care. Bruiſed as you are, he will bind you up, and ſupport you.

II. But I proceed to take a view of the character of a weak chriſtian, as repreſented in the other metaphor in my text, namely, *ſmoking flax*. The idea moſt naturally conveyed by this metaphor is, that of grace true and ſincere, but languiſhing and juſt expiring, like a candle juſt blown out, which ſtill ſmokes and retains a feeble ſpark of fire. It ſignifies a ſuſceptibility of a farther grace, or a readineſs to catch that ſacred fire, as a candle juſt put out is eaſily rekindled. This metaphor therefore leads me to deſcribe the reality of religion in a low degree, or to delineate the true chriſtian in his moſt languiſhing hours. And in ſo doing I ſhall mention thoſe diſpoſitions and exerciſes which the weakeſt chriſtian feels, even in theſe melancholy ſeaſons; for even in theſe he widely differs ſtill from the moſt poliſhed hypocrite in his higheſt improvements. On this ſubject let me ſolicit your moſt ſerious attention; for, if you have the leaſt ſpark of real religion within you, you are now likely to diſcover it, as I am not going to riſe to the high attainments of chriſtians of the firſt rank, but to ſtoop to the character of the meaneſt. Now the peculiar diſpoſitions and exerciſes of heart which ſuch in ſome meaſure feel, you may diſcover from the following ſhort hiſtory of their caſe.

The weak chriſtian in ſuch languiſhing hours does indeed ſometimes fall into ſuch a ſtate of careleſſneſs and inſenſibility, that he has very few and but ſuperficial exerciſes of mind about divine things. But generally he feels an uneaſineſs, an emptineſs, an anxiety within, under which he droops and pines away, and all the world cannot heal the diſeaſe. He has choſen

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the bleſſed God as his ſupreme happineſs; and, when he cannot derive happineſs from that ſource, all the ſweets of created enjoyments become inſipid to him, and cannot fill up the prodigious void which the abſence of the Supreme Good leaves in his craving ſoul. Sometimes his anxiety is indiſtinct and confuſed, and he hardly knows what ails him; but at other times he feels it is for God, the living God, that his ſoul pants. The evaporations of this ſmoking flax naturally aſcend towards heaven. He knows that he never can be happy till he can enjoy the communications of divine love. Let him turn which way he will, he can find no ſolid eaſe, no reſt, till he comes to this center again.

Even at ſuch times he cannot be thoroughly reconciled to his ſins. He may be parleying with ſome of them in an unguarded hour, and ſeem to be negociating a peace; but the truce is ſoon ended, and they are at variance again. The enmity of a renewed heart ſoon riſes againſt this old enemy. And there is this circumſtance remarkable in the believer's hatred and oppoſition to ſin, that they do not proceed principally, much leſs entirely, from a fear of puniſhment, but from a generous ſenſe of its intrinſic baſeneſs and ingratitude, and its contrariety to the holy nature of God. This is the ground of his hatred to ſin, and ſorrow for it; and this ſhews that there is at leaſt a ſpark of true grace in his heart, and that he does not act altogether from the low, intereſted, and mercenary principles of nature.

At ſuch times he is very jealous of the ſincerity of his religion, afraid that all his paſt experiences were deluſive, and afraid that, if he ſhould die in his preſent ſtate, he would be for ever miſerable. A very anxious ſtate is this! The ſtupid world can lie ſecure while this grand concern lies in the moſt dreadful ſuſpence. But the tender-hearted believer is not capable of ſuch fool-hardineſs: he ſhudders at the thought of everlaſting ſeparation from that God and Saviour whom he loves. He loves him, and therefore the

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fear of ſeparation from him, fills him with all the anxiety of bereaved love. This to him is the moſt painful ingredient of the puniſhment of hell. Hell would be a ſevenfold hell to a lover of God, becauſe it is a ſtate of baniſhment from him whom he loves. He could for ever languiſh and pine away under the conſuming diſtreſſes of widowed love, which thoſe that love him not cannot feel. And has God kindled the ſacred flame in his heart in order to render him capable of the more exquiſite pain? Will he exclude from his preſence the poor creature that clings to him, and languiſhes for him? No, the flax that does but ſmoke with his love was never intended to be fuel for hell; but he will blow it up into a flame, and nouriſh it till it mingles with the ſeraphic ardors in the region of perfect love.

The weak believer ſeems ſometimes driven by the tempeſts of luſt and temptation from off the rock Jeſus Chriſt. But he makes towards it on the ſtormy billows, and labours to lay hold upon it, and recover his ſtation there; for he is ſenſible there is no other foundation of ſafety, but that without Chriſt he muſt periſh for ever. It is the habitual diſpoſition of the believer's ſoul to depend upon Jeſus Chriſt alone. He retains a kind of direction or tendency towards him, like the needle touched with the load-ſtone towards the pole; and, if his heart is turned from its courſe, it trembles and quivers till it gains its favourite point again, and fixes there. Sometimes indeed a conſciouſneſs of guilt renders him ſhy of his God and Saviour; and after ſuch baſe ingratitude he is aſhamed to go to him: but at length neceſſity as well as inclination conſtrains him, and he is obliged to cry out, *Lord, to whom ſhall I go? thou haſt the words of eternal life.* John vi. 68. "In thee alone I find reſt to my ſoul; and therefore to thee I muſt fly, though I am aſhamed and confounded to appear in thy preſence."

In ſhort, the weakeſt chriſtian upon earth ſenſibly feels that his comfort riſes and falls, as he lives nearer to

to or farther from his God. The love of God has ſuch an habitual predominancy even in his heart, that nothing in the world, nor even all the world together can fill up his place. No, when he is gone, heaven and earth cannot repleniſh the mighty void. Even the weakeſt chriſtian upon earth longs to be delivered from ſin, from all ſin without exception; and a body of death hanging about him is the burden of his life. Even the poor jealous languiſhing chriſtian has his hope, all the little hope that he has, built upon Jeſus Chriſt. Even this ſmoking flax ſends up ſome exhalations of love towards heaven. Even the poor creature that oft... ...ars he is altogether a ſlave to ſin, honeſtly, though feebly, labours to be holy, to be holy as an angel, yea, to be holy as God is holy. He has an heart that feels the attractive charms of holineſs, and he is ſo captivated by it, that ſin can never recover its former place in his heart: no, the tyrant is for ever dethroned, and the believer would rather die than yield himſelf a tame ſlave to the uſurped tyranny again.

Thus I have delineated to you in the plaineſt manner I could, the character of a weak chriſtian. Some of you I am afraid cannot lay claim even to this low character. If ſo, you may be ſure you are not true chriſtians, even of the loweſt rank. You may be ſure you have not the leaſt ſpark of true religion in your hearts, but are utterly deſtitute of it.

But ſome of you, I hope, can ſay, "Well, after all my doubts and fears, if this be the character of a true, though weak chriſtian, then I may humbly hope that I am one. I am indeed confirmed in it that I am leſs than the leaſt of all other ſaints upon the face of the earth, but yet I ſee that I am a ſaint; for thus has my heart been exerciſed, even in my dark and languiſhing hours. This ſecret uneaſineſs and pining anxiety, this thirſt for God, for the living God, this tendency of ſoul towards Jeſus Chriſt, this implacable enmity to ſin, this panting and ſtruggling after holineſs; theſe

theſe things have I often felt." And have you indeed? then away with your doubts and jealouſies! away with your fears and deſpondencies! There is at leaſt an immortal ſpark kindled in your hearts, which the united power of men and devils, of ſin and temptation, ſhall never be able to quench. No, it ſhall yet riſe into a flame, and burn with ſeraphic ardors for ever.

For your farther encouragement I proceed,

II. To illuſtrate the care and compaſſion of Jeſus Chriſt for ſuch poor weaklings as you.

This may appear a needleſs taſk to ſome; for who is there that does not believe it? But to ſuch would I ſay, it is no eaſy thing to eſtabliſh a trembling ſoul in the full belief of this truth. It is eaſy for one that does not ſee his danger, and does not feel his extreme need of ſalvation, and the difficulty of the work, to believe that Chriſt is willing and able to ſave him. But O! to a poor ſoul, deeply ſenſible of its condition, this is no eaſy matter. Beſides, the heart may need to be more deeply affected with this truth, though the underſtanding ſhould need no farther arguments of the ſpeculative kind for its conviction; and to impreſs this truth is my preſent deſign.

For this purpoſe I need but read and paraphraſe to you a few of the many kind declarations and aſſurances which Jeſus has given us in his word, and relate the happy experiences of ſome of his ſaints there recorded, who found him true and faithful to his word.

The Lord Jeſus ſeems to have a peculiar tenderneſs for the poor, the mourners, the broken-hearted; and theſe are peculiarly the objects of his mediatorial office. *The Lord hath anointed me*, ſays he, *to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath ſent me* all the way from my native heaven down to earth, upon this compaſſionate errand, *to bind up the broken-hearted, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs.* Iſa. lxi. 1—3. *Thus ſaith*

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the Lord, in ſtrains of majeſty that become him, *the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footſtool: where is the houſe that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my reſt? For all theſe things hath my hand made, ſaith the Lord.* Had he ſpoken uniformly in this majeſtic language to us guilty worms, the declaration might have overwhelmed us with awe, but could not have inſpired us with hope. But he advances himſelf thus high, on purpoſe to let us ſee how low he can ſtoop. Hear the encouraging ſequel of this his majeſtic ſpeech: *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word.* Let heaven and earth wonder that he will look down through all the ſhining ranks of angels, and look by princes and nobles, to fix his eye upon this man, this poor man, this contrite, broken-hearted, trembling creature. *Iſa.* lxvi. 1, 2. He loves to dwell upon this ſubject, and therefore you hear it again in the ſame prophecy: "Thus ſaith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is holy,—" what does he ſay?—*I dwell in the high and holy place.* Iſa. lvii. 15. This is ſaid in character. This is a dwelling in ſome meaſure worthy the inhabitant. But O! will he ſtoop to dwell in a lower manſion, or pitch his tent among mortals? yes, he dwells not only in his *high and holy place*, but alſo *with him that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* He charges Peter to *feed his lambs* as well as his ſheep; that is, to take the tendereſt care even of the weakeſt in his flock. *John* xxi. 15. And he ſeverely rebukes the ſhepherds of Iſrael, *Becauſe*, ſays he, *ye have not ſtrengthened the diſeaſed, neither have ye healed that which was ſick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken.* Ezek. xxxiv. 4. But what an amiable reverſe is the character of the great Shepherd and Biſhop of ſouls! *Behold*, ſays Iſaiah, *the Lord will come with a ſtrong hand, and his arm ſhall rule for him: behold his reward is with him, and his work before him.* How juſtly

juſtly may we tremble at this proclamation of the approaching God! for who can ſtand when he appeareth? But how agreeably are our fears diſappointed in what follows! If he comes to take vengeance on his enemies, he alſo comes to ſhew mercy to the meaneſt of his people. *He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd: he ſhall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young*; Iſa. xl. 10, 11. that is, he ſhall exerciſe the tendereſt and moſt compaſſionate care towards the meaneſt and weakeſt of his flock. *He looked down*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *from the height of his ſanctuary*; *from heaven did the Lord behold the earth*; not to view the grandeur and pride of courts and kings, nor the heroic exploits of conquerors, but *to hear the groaning of the priſoner, to looſe thoſe that are appointed to die. He will regard the prayer of the deſtitute, and not deſpiſe their prayer. This ſhall be written for the generation to come.* Pſalm cii. 17—20. It was written for your encouragement, my brethren. Above three thouſand years ago this encouraging paſſage was entered into the ſacred records for the ſupport of poor deſponding ſouls in Virginia, in the ends of the earth. O what an early provident care does God ſhew for his people! There are none of the ſeven churches of Aſia ſo highly commended by Chriſt as that of Philadelphia; and yet in commending her, all he can ſay is, "Thou haſt a little ſtrength." *I know thy works*; *behold I have ſet before thee an open door, and no man can ſhut it, for thou haſt a little ſtrength.* Rev. iii. 8. O how acceptable is a little ſtrength to Jeſus Chriſt, and how ready is he to improve it! *He giveth power to the faint*, ſays Iſaiah, *and to them that have no might he increaſeth ſtrength.* Iſa. xl. 29. Hear farther what words of grace and truth flowed from the lips of Jeſus: *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt*; *for I am meek and lowly in heart.* Matt. xi. 28, 29. *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out.* John vi. 57. *If any man thirſt, let him come unto me and drink.*

drink. John vii. 37. *Let him that is athirſt come; and whoſoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.* Rev. xxii. 17. O what ſtrong conſolation is here! what exceeding great and precious promiſes are theſe! I might eaſily add to the catalogue, but theſe may ſuffice.

Let us now ſee how his people in every age have ever found theſe promiſes made good. Here David may be conſulted, *inſtar omnium*, and he will tell you, pointing to himſelf, *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and delivered him out of all his troubles.* Pſalm xxxiv. 6. St. Paul, in the midſt of affliction, calls God *the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation.* 2 Cor. i. 3, 4. *God,* ſays he, *that comforteth thoſe that are caſt down, comforteth us.* 2 Cor. vii. 6. What a ſweetly emphatical declaration is this! "God the comforter of the humble, comforted us*." He is not only the Lord of hoſts, the King of kings, the Creator of the world, but among his more auguſt characters he aſſumes this title, "The Comforter of the humble." Such Saint Paul found him in an hour of temptation, when he had this ſupporting anſwer to his repeated prayer for deliverance, *My grace is ſufficient for thee; for my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs.* 2 Cor. xii. 9. Since this was the caſe, ſince his weakneſs was more than ſupplied by the ſtrength of Chriſt, and was a foil to ſet it off, St. Paul ſeems quite regardleſs what infirmities he laboured under. Nay, *moſt gladly,* ſays he, *will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me. Therefore I take pleaſure in infirmities—for when I am weak, then am I ſtrong.* He could take no pleaſure in feeling himſelf weak; but the mortification was made up by the pleaſure he found in leaning upon this almighty ſupport. His wounds were painful to him; but, O! the pleaſure he found in feeling this divine phyſician dreſſing his wounds,

* This is a more literal tranſlation of—ὁ παρακαλῶν τοὺς ταπεινοὺς παρεκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ Θεός.

in ſome meaſure ſwallowed up the pain. It was probably experience, as well as inſpiration, that dictated to the apoſtle that amiable character of Chriſt, that he is *a merciful and faithful high-prieſt, who being himſelf tempted, knows how to ſuccour them that are tempted.* Heb. ii. 17, 18. And *we have not an high-prieſt which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin.* Heb. iv. 15.

But why need I multiply arguments? Go to his croſs, and there learn his love and compaſſion, from his groans and wounds, and blood, and death. Would he hang there in ſuch agony for ſinners if he were not willing to ſave them, and cheriſh every good principle in them? There you may have much the ſame evidence of his compaſſion as Thomas had of his reſurrection; you may look into his hands, and ſee the print of the nails; and into his ſide, and ſee the ſcar of the ſpear; which loudly proclaim his readineſs to pity and help you.

And now, poor trembling doubting ſouls, what hinders but you ſhould raiſe up your drooping head, and take courage? May you not venture your ſouls into ſuch compaſſionate and faithful hands? Why ſhould the bruiſed reed ſhrink from him, when he comes not to tread it down, but raiſe it up?

As I am really ſolicitous that impenitent hearts among us ſhould be pierced with the medicinal anguiſh and ſorrow of conviction and repentance, and the moſt friendly heart cannot form a kinder wiſh for them, ſo I am truly ſolicitous that every honeſt ſoul, in which there is the leaſt ſpark of true piety, ſhould enjoy the pleaſure of it. It is indeed to be lamented that they who have a title to ſo much happineſs ſhould enjoy ſo little of it; it is very incongruous that they ſhould go bowing the head in their way towards heaven, as if they were haſtening to the place of execution, and that they ſhould ſerve ſo good a maſter with ſuch heavy hearts. O lift up the hands that hang down, and

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ſtrengthen the feeble knees! *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, ſaith your God. Be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* Truſt in your all-ſufficient Redeemer, truſt in him though he ſhould ſlay you.

And do not indulge cauſeleſs doubts and fears concerning your ſincerity. When they ariſe in your minds examine them, and ſearch whether there be any ſufficient reaſon for them; and if you diſcover there is not, then reject them and ſet them at defiance, and entertain your hopes in ſpite of them, and ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul, and why art thou diſquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I ſhall yet praiſe him, the health of my countenance, and my God.* Pſalm xliii. 11.

SERMON IX.

The Connexion between Preſent Holineſs and Future Felicity.

HEB. xii. 14. *Follow—holineſs; without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

AS the human ſoul was originally deſigned for the enjoyment of no leſs a portion than the ever-bleſſed God, it was formed with a ſtrong innate tendency towards happineſs. It has not only an eager fondneſs for exiſtence, but for ſome good to render its exiſtence happy. And the privation of being itſelf is not more terrible than the privation of all its bleſſings. It is true, in the preſent degeneracy of human nature, this vehement deſire is miſerably perverted and miſplaced: man ſeeks his ſupreme happineſs in ſinful, or at beſt in created enjoyments, forgetful of the uncreated fountain of bliſs; but yet ſtill he ſeeks happineſs; ſtill this innate *impetus* is predominant, and though he miſtakes the means, yet he ſtill retains a general aim

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at the end. Hence he ranſacks this lower world in queſt of felicity; climbs in ſearch of it the ſlippery aſcent of honour; hunts for it in the treaſures of gold and ſilver; or plunges for it in the foul ſtreams of ſenſual pleaſures. But ſince all the ſordid ſatisfaction reſulting from theſe things are not adequate to the unbounded cravings of the mind, and ſince the ſatisfaction is tranſitory and periſhing, or we may be wretched from it by the inexorable hand of death, the mind breaks through the limits of the preſent enjoyments, and even of the lower creation, and ranges through the unknown ſcenes of futurity in queſt of ſome untried good. Hope makes excurſions into the dark duration between the preſent *now* and the grave, and forms to itſelf pleaſing images of approaching bleſſings, which often vaniſh in the embrace, like deluſive phantoms. Nay, it launches into the vaſt unknown world that lies beyond the grave, and roves through the regions of immenſity after ſome complete felicity to ſupply the defects of ſublunary enjoyments. Hence, though men, till their ſpirits are refined by regenerating grace, have no reliſh for celeſtial joys, but pant for the poor pleaſures of time and ſenſe, yet, as they cannot avoid the unwelcome conſciouſneſs that death will ere long rend them from theſe ſordid and momentary enjoyments, are conſtrained to indulge the hope of bliſs in a future ſtate: and they promiſe themſelves happineſs in another world when they can no longer enjoy any in this. And as reaſon and revelation unitedly aſſure them that this felicity cannot then conſiſt in ſenſual indulgences, they generally expect it will be of a more refined and ſpiritual nature, and flow more immediately from the great Father of ſpirits.

He muſt indeed be miſerable that abandons all hope of this bleſſedneſs. The chriſtian religion affords him no other proſpect but that of eternal, intolerable miſery in the regions of darkneſs and deſpair; and if he flies to infidelity as a refuge, it can afford him no comfort but the ſhocking proſpect of annihilation.

Now,

Now, if men were preſſed into heaven by an unavoidable fatality, if happineſs was promiſcuouſly promiſed to them all without diſtinction of characters, then they might indulge a blind unexamined hope, and never perplex themſelves with anxious enquiries about it. And he might juſtly be deemed a malignant diſturber of the repoſe of mankind that would attempt to ſhock their hope, and frighten them with cauſeleſs ſcruples.

But if the light of nature intimates, and the voice of ſcripture proclaims aloud, that this eternal felicity is reſerved only for perſons of particular characters, and that multitudes, multitudes who entertained pleaſing hopes of it, are confounded with an eternal diſappointment, and ſhall ſuffer an endleſs duration in the moſt terrible miſeries, we ought each of us to take the alarm, and examine the grounds of our hope, that, if they appear ſufficient, we may allow ourſelves a rational ſatisfaction in them; and, if they are found deluſive, we may abandon them and ſeek for a hope which will bear the teſt now while it may be obtained. And however diſagreeable the taſk be to give our fellow-creatures even profitable uneaſineſs, yet he muſt appear to the impartial a friend to the beſt intereſts of mankind, who points out the evidences and foundation of a rational and ſcriptural hope, and expoſes the various miſtakes to which we are ſubject in ſo important a caſe.

And if, when we look around us, we find perſons full of the hopes of heaven, who can give no ſcriptural evidences of them to themſelves or others; if we find many indulging this pleaſing deluſion, whoſe practices are mentioned by God himſelf as the certain marks of periſhing ſinners; and if perſons are ſo tenacious of theſe hopes, that they will retain them to their everlaſting ruin, unleſs the moſt convictive methods are taken to undeceive them; then it is high time for thoſe to whom the care of ſouls (a weightier

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charge than that of kingdoms) is intruſted, to uſe the greateſt plainneſs for this purpoſe.

This is my chief deſign at preſent, and to this my text naturally leads me. It contains theſe doctrines:

Firſt, That without holineſs here it is impoſſible for us to enjoy heavenly happineſs in the future world. To ſee the Lord, is here put for enjoying him; ſee Rom. viii. 24. and the metaphor ſignifies the happineſs of the future ſtate in general; and more particularly intimes that the knowledge of God will be a ſpecial ingredient therein. See a parallel expreſſion in Matt. v. 8.

Secondly, That this conſideration ſhould induce us to uſe the moſt earneſt endeavours to obtain the heavenly happineſs. Purſue holineſs, becauſe *without* it *no man can ſee the Lord.*

Hence I am naturally led,

I. To explain the nature of that *holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

II. To ſhew what endeavours ſhould be uſed to obtain it. And,

III. To urge you to uſe them by the conſideration of the abſolute neceſſity of holineſs.

I. I am to explain the nature of holineſs. And I ſhall give you a brief definition of it, and then mention ſome of thoſe diſpoſitions and practices which naturally flow from it.

The moſt intelligible deſcription of holineſs, as it is inherent in us, may be this, "It is a conformity in heart and practice to the revealed will of God." As the Supreme Being is the ſtandard of all perfection, his holineſs in particular is the ſtandard of ours. Then we are holy when his image is ſtamped upon our hearts and reflected in our lives; ſo the apoſtle defines it, *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs.* Eph. iv. 24. *Whom he did predeſtinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* Rom. viii. 29. Hence holineſs may be defined, "A conformity to God in his moral perfections."

tions." But as we cannot have a diſtinct knowledge of theſe perfections but as they are manifeſted by the revealed will of God, I chooſe to define holineſs, as above, "A conformity to his revealed will." Now his revealed will comprizes both the law and the goſpel: the law informs us of the duty which we as creatures owe to God as a being of ſupreme excellency, as our Creator and Benefactor, and to men as our fellow-creatures; and the goſpel informs us of the duty which as ſinners we owe to God as reconcileable through a Mediator. Our obedience to the former implies the whole of morality, and to the latter the whole of evangelical graces, as faith in a Mediator, repentance, &c.

From this definition of holineſs it appears, on the one hand, that it is abſolutely neceſſary to ſee the Lord; for unleſs our diſpoſitions are conformed to him, we cannot be happy in the enjoyment of him: and, on the other hand, that they who are made thus holy, are prepared for the viſion and fruition of his face, as they can reliſh the divineſt pleaſure.

But as a conciſe definition of holineſs may give an auditory but very imperfect ideas of it, I ſhall expatiate upon the diſpoſitions and practices in which it conſiſts, or which naturally reſult from it; and they are ſuch as follow:

1. A delight in God for his holineſs. Self-love may prompt us to love him for his goodneſs to us; and ſo many unregenerate men may have a ſelfiſh love to God on this account. But to love God becauſe he is infinitely holy, becauſe he bears an infinite deteſtation to all ſin, and will not indulge his creatures in the neglect of the leaſt inſtance of holineſs, but commands them to be holy as he is holy, this is a diſpoſition connatural to a renewed ſoul only, and argues a conformity to his image. Every nature is moſt agreeable to itſelf, and a holy nature is moſt agreeable to an holy nature.

Here I would make a remark, which may God deeply impreſs on your hearts, and which for that purpoſe I ſhall ſubjoin to each particular, that holineſs in fallen man

man is ſupernatural; I mean, we are not born with it, we give no diſcoveries of it, till we have experienced a great change. Thus we find it in the preſent caſe; we have no natural love to God becauſe of his infinite purity and hatred to all ſin; nay, we would love him more did he give us greater indulgences; and I am afraid the love of ſome perſons is founded upon a miſtake; they love him becauſe they imagine he does not hate ſin, nor them for it, ſo much as he really does; becauſe they think he will bring them to heaven at laſt, let them live as they liſt; and becauſe they do not expect he is ſo inexorably juſt in his dealings with the ſinner. It is no wonder they love ſuch a ſoft, eaſy, paſſive being as this imaginary deity; but did they ſee the luſtre of that holineſs of God which dazzles the celeſtial armies; did they but know the terrors of his juſtice, and his implacable indignation againſt ſin, their innate enmity would ſhew its poiſon, and their hearts would riſe againſt God in all thoſe horrible blaſphemies with which awakened ſinners are ſo frequently ſhocked. Such love as this is ſo far from being acceptable, that it is the greateſt affront to the Supreme Being, as, if a profligate loved you on the miſtaken ſuppoſition that you were ſuch a libertine as himſelf, it would rather inflame your indignation than procure your reſpect.

But to a regenerate mind how ſtrong, how tranſporting are the charms of holineſs! Such a mind joins the anthem of ſeraphs with the divineſt complacency, Rev. iv. 8. and anticipates the ſong of glorified ſaints, *Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy?* Rev. xv. 4. The perfections of God loſe their luſtre, or ſink into objects of terror or contempt, if this glorious attribute be abſtracted. Without holineſs power becomes tyranny, omniſcience craft, juſtice revenge and cruelty, and even the amiable attribute of goodneſs loſes its charms, and degenerates into a blind promiſcuous prodigality, or fooliſh undiſcerning fondneſs: but when theſe perfections are cloth-

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ed in the beauties of holineſs, how Godlike, how majeſtic, how lovely and attractive do they appear! and with what complacence does a mind faſhioned after the divine image acquieſce in them! It may appear amiable even to an unholy ſinner that the exertions of almighty power ſhould be regulated by the moſt conſummate wiſdom; that juſtice ſhould not without diſtinction puniſh the guilty and the innocent; but an holy ſoul only can rejoice that divine goodneſs will not communicate happineſs to the diſgrace of holineſs; and that, rather than it ſhould overflow in a blind promiſcuous manner, the whole human race ſhould be miſerable. A ſelfiſh ſinner has nothing in view but his own happineſs; and if this be obtained, he has no anxiety about the illuſtration of the divine purity; but it recommends happineſs itſelf to a ſanctified ſoul, that it cannot be communicated in a way inconſiſtent with the beauty of holineſs.

2. Holineſs conſiſts in an hearty complacence in the law of God, becauſe of its purity. The law is the tranſcript of the moral perfections of God; and if we love the original we ſhall love the copy. Accordingly it is natural to a renewed mind to love the divine law, becauſe it is perfectly holy; becauſe it makes no allowance for the leaſt ſin, and requires every duty that it becomes us to perform towards God. Pſalm cxix. 140. and xix. 7—10. Romans vii. 12, compared with 22.

But is this our natural diſpoſition? Is this the diſpoſition of the generality? Do they not, on the contrary, ſecretly find fault with the law, becauſe it is ſo ſtrict? And their common objection againſt that holineſs of life which it enjoins is, that they cannot bear to be ſo preciſe. Hence they are always for abating the rigour of the law, for bringing it down to ſome imaginary ſtandard of their own, to their preſent ability, to ſins of practice without regard to the ſinful diſpoſitions of the heart; or to the prevailing diſpoſitions of the heart without regard to the firſt workings of

concupiſcence, thoſe embryos of iniquity; and if they love the law at all, as they profeſs to do, it is upon ſuppoſition that it is not ſo ſtrict as it really is, but grants them greater indulgences. Rom. vii. 7.

Hence it appears that, if we are made holy at all, it muſt be by a ſupernatural change; and when that is effected, what a ſtrange and happy alteration does the ſinner perceive? with what pleaſure does he reſign himſelf a willing ſubject to that law to which he was once ſo averſe? And when he fails (as, alas! he does in many things) how is he humbled! he does not lay the fault upon the law as requiring impoſſibilities, but lays the whole fault upon himſelf as a corrupt ſinner.

3. Holineſs conſiſts in an hearty complacence in the goſpel-method of ſalvation, becauſe it tends to illuſtrate the moral perfections of the Deity, and to diſcover the beauties of holineſs.

The goſpel informs us of two grand pre-requiſites to the ſalvation of the fallen ſons of men, namely, The ſatisfaction of divine juſtice by the obedience and paſſion of Chriſt, that God might be reconciled to them conſiſtently with his perfections; and the ſanctification of ſinners by the efficacy of the Holy Ghoſt, that they might be capable of enjoying God, and that he might maintain intimate communion with them without any ſtain to his holineſs. Theſe two grand articles contain the ſubſtance of the goſpel; and our acquieſcence in them is the ſubſtance of that evangelical obedience which it requires of us, and which is eſſential to holineſs in a fallen creature.

Now, it is evident, that without either of theſe the moral perfections of the Deity, particularly his holineſs, could not be illuſtrated, or even ſecured in the ſalvation of a ſinner. Had he received an apoſtate race into favour, who had conſpired in the moſt unnatural rebellion againſt him, without any ſatisfaction, his holineſs would have been eclipſed; it would not have appeared that he had ſo invincible an abhorrence of ſin, ſo zealous a regard for the vindication of his own

own holy law; or to his veracity, which had threatened condign puniſhment to offenders. But by the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, his holineſs is illuſtrated in the moſt conſpicuous manner; now it appears, that God would upon no terms ſave a ſinner but that of adequate ſatisfaction, and that no other was ſufficient but the ſuffering of his co-equal Son, otherwiſe he would not have appointed him to ſuſtain the character of Mediator; and now it appears that his hatred of ſin is ſuch that he would not let it paſs unpuniſhed even in his own Son, when only imputed to him. In like manner, if ſinners, while unholy, were admitted into communion with God in heaven, it would obſcure the glory of his holineſs, and it would not then appear that ſuch was the purity of his nature that he could have no fellowſhip with ſin. But now it is evident, that even the blood of Immanuel cannot purchaſe heaven to be enjoyed by a ſinner while unholy, but that every one that arrives at heaven muſt firſt be ſanctified. An unholy ſinner can be no more ſaved, while ſuch, by the goſpel than by the law; but here lies the difference, that the goſpel makes proviſion for his ſanctification, which is gradually carried on here, and perfected at death, before his admiſſion into the heavenly glory.

Now it is the genius of true holineſs to acquieſce in both theſe articles. A ſanctified ſoul places all its dependence on the righteouſneſs of Chriſt for acceptance. It would be diſagreeable to it to have the leaſt concurrence in its own juſtification. It is not only willing, but delights to renounce all its own righteouſneſs, and to glory in Chriſt alone. Phil. iii. 3. Free grace to ſuch ſouls is a charming theme, and ſalvation is more acceptable, becauſe conveyed in this way. It would render heaven itſelf diſagreeable, and wither all its joys, were they brought thither in a way that degrades or does not illuſtrate the glory of God's holineſs; but O how agreeable the thought, that he that glorieth muſt glory in the Lord, and that the pride of all fleſh ſhall be abaſed!

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So an holy perſon rejoices that the way of holineſs is the appointed way to heaven. He is not forced to be holy merely by the ſervile conſideration that he muſt be ſo or periſh, and ſo unwillingly ſubmits to the neceſſity which he cannot avoid, when in the mean time, were it put to his choice, he would chooſe to reſerve ſome ſins, and neglect ſome painful duties. So far from this, that he delights in the goſpel-conſtitution, becauſe it requires univerſal holineſs, and heaven would be leſs agreeable, were he to carry even the leaſt ſin thither. He thinks it no hardſhip that he muſt deny himſelf in his ſinful pleaſures, and habituate himſelf to ſo much ſtrictneſs in religion; no, but he bleſſes the Lord for obliging him to it, and where he fails he charges himſelf with it, and is ſelf-abaſed upon the account.

This is ſolid rational religion, fit to be depended upon, in oppoſition to the antinomian licentiouſneſs, the freaks of enthuſiaſm, and the irrational flights of paſſion and imagination on the one hand; and in oppoſition to formality, mere morality, and the ſelf-ſprung religion of nature on the other. And is it not evident we are deſtitute of this by nature? Men naturally are averſe to this goſpel-method of ſalvation; they will not ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of God, but fix their dependence, in part at leaſt, upon their own merit. Their proud hearts cannot bear the thought that all their performances muſt go for juſt nothing in their juſtification. They are alſo averſe to the way of holineſs; hence they will either abandon the expectation of heaven, and, ſince they cannot obtain it in their ſinful ways, deſperately conclude to go on in ſin come what will; or, with all the little ſophiſtry they are capable of, they will endeavour to widen the way to heaven, and perſuade themſelves they ſhall attain it, notwithſtanding their continuance in ſome known iniquity, and though their hearts have never been thoroughly ſanctified. Alas! how evident is this all around us! How many either give up their hopes of heaven

heaven rather than part with ſin, or vainly hold them, while their diſpoſitions and practices prove them groundleſs? And muſt not ſuch degenerate creatures be renewed ere they can be holy, or ſee the Lord?

4. Holineſs conſiſts in an habitual delight in all the duties of holineſs towards God and man, and an earneſt deſire for communion with God in them. This is the natural reſult of all the foregoing particulars. If we love God for his holineſs, we ſhall delight in that ſervice in which our conformity to him conſiſts; if we love his law, we ſhall delight in that obedience which it enjoins; and if we take complacence in the evangelical method of ſalvation, we ſhall take delight in that holineſs, without which we cannot enjoy it. The ſervice of God is the element, the pleaſure of an holy ſoul; while others delight in the riches, the honours, or the pleaſures of this world, the holy ſoul deſires one thing of the Lord, that it may behold his beauty while enquiring in his temple. Pſalm xxvii. 4. Such a perſon delights in retired converſe with heaven, in meditation and prayer. Pſalm cxxxix. 17. and lxiii. 5, 6. and lxxiii. 28. He alſo takes pleaſure in juſtice, benevolence, and charity towards men, Pſalm cxii. 5, 9. and in the ſtricteſt temperance and ſobriety. 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Moreover, the mere formality of performing religious duties does not ſatisfy the true ſaint, unleſs he enjoys a divine freedom therein, receives communications of grace from heaven, and finds his graces quickened. Pſalm xlii. 1, 2.

This conſideration alſo ſhews us that holineſs in us muſt be ſupernatural; for do we naturally thus delight in the ſervice of God? or do you all now thus delight in it? is it not rather a wearineſs to you, and do you not find more pleaſures in other things? Surely you muſt be changed, or you can have no reliſh for the enjoyment of heavenly happineſs.

5. To conſtitute us ſaints indeed there muſt be univerſal holineſs in practice. This naturally follows from the

the laſt, for as the body obeys the ſtronger volitions of the will, ſo when the heart is prevailingly diſpoſed to the ſervice of God, the man will habitually practiſe it. This is generally mentioned in ſcripture as the grand characteriſtic of real religion, without which all our pretenſions are vain. 1 John iii. 3—10. and v. 3. John xv. 14. True chriſtians are far from being perfect in practice, yet they are prevailingly holy in all manner of converſation; they do not live habitually in any one known ſin, or wilfully neglect any one known duty. Pſalm cxix. 6.

Without this practical holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord; and if ſo, how great a change muſt be wrought on moſt before they can ſee him, for how few are thus adorned with a life of univerſal holineſs? Many profeſs the name of Chriſt, but how few of them depart from iniquity? But to what purpoſe do they call him Maſter and Lord, while they do not the things which he commands them?

Thus I have, as plainly as I could, deſcribed the nature and properties of that holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord; and they who are poſſeſſed of it may lift up their heads with joy, aſſured that God has begun a good work in them, and that he will carry it on; and on the other hand, they that are deſtitute of it may be aſſured, that, unleſs they are made new creatures, they cannot ſee the Lord. I come,

II. To ſhew you the endeavours we ſhould uſe to obtain this holineſs. And they are ſuch as theſe:

1. Endeavour to know whether you are holy or not by cloſe examination. It is hard indeed for ſome to know poſitively that they are holy, as they are perplexed with the appearances of realities, and the fears of counterfeits; but it is then eaſy for many to conclude negatively that they are not holy, as they have not the likeneſs of it. To determine this point is of great uſe to our ſucceſsful ſeeking after holineſs. That an unregenerate ſinner ſhould attend on the means of grace with other aims than one that has reaſon to believe

lieve himſelf ſanctified, is evident. The anxieties, ſorrows, deſires, and endeavours of the one ſhould run in a very different channel from thoſe of the other. The one ſhould look upon himſelf as a guilty and condemned ſinner; the other ſhould allow himſelf the pleaſure of a juſtified ſtate: the one ſhould purſue after the implantation; the other after the increaſe of holineſs: the one ſhould indulge a ſeaſonable concern about his loſt condition; the other repoſe an humble confidence in God as reconciled to him: the one ſhould look upon the threatenings of God as his doom; the other embrace the promiſes as his portion. Hence it follows that, while we are miſtaken about our ſtate, we cannot uſe endeavours after holineſs in a proper manner. We act like a phyſician that applies medicines at random, without knowing the diſeaſe. It is a certain concluſion that the moſt generous charity, under ſcriptural limitations, cannot avoid, that multitudes are deſtitute of holineſs, and ought not we to enquire with proper anxiety whether we belong to that number? Let us be impartial, and proceed according to evidence. If we find thoſe marks of holineſs in heart and life which have been mentioned, let not an exceſſive ſcrupuloſity frighten us from drawing the happy concluſion: and, if we find them not, let us exerciſe ſo much wholeſome ſeverity againſt ourſelves, as honeſtly to conclude we are unholy ſinners, and muſt be renewed before we can ſee the Lord. The concluſion no doubt will give you painful anxiety; but if you was my deareſt friend, I could not form a kinder wiſh for you than that you might be inceſſantly diſtreſſed with it till you are born again. This concluſion will not be always avoidable; the light of eternity will force you upon it; and whether is it better to give way to it now, when it may be to your advantage, or be forced to admit it then, when it will be only a torment?

2. Awake, ariſe, and betake yourſelf in earneſt to all the means of grace. Your life, your eternal life

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is concerned, and therefore it calls for all the ardor and earneſtneſs you are capable of exerting. Accuſtom yourſelf to meditation, converſe with yourſelves in retirement, and live no longer ſtrangers at home. Read the word of God and other good books, with diligence, attention, and ſelf-application. Attend on the public miniſtrations of the goſpel, not as a trifler, but as one that ſees his eternal All concerned. Shun the tents of ſin, the rendezvous of ſinners, and aſſociate with thoſe that have experienced the change you want, and can give you proper directions. Proſtrate yourſelf before the God of heaven, confeſs your ſin, implore his mercy, cry to him night and day, and give him no reſt, till the importunity prevail, and you take the kingdom of heaven by violence.

But after all, acknowledge that it is God that muſt work in you both to will and to do, and that when you have done all theſe things you are but unprofitable ſervants. I do not preſcribe theſe directions as though theſe means could effect holineſs in you; no, they can no more do it than a pen can write without a hand. It is the holy Spirit's province alone to ſanctify a degenerate ſinner, but he is wont to do it while we are waiting upon him in the uſe of theſe means, though our beſt endeavours give us no title to his grace; but he may juſtly leave us after all in that ſtate of condemnation and corruption into which we have voluntarily brought ourſelves. I go on,

III. And laſtly, to urge you to the uſe of theſe means from the conſideration mentioned in the text, the abſolute neceſſity of holineſs to the enjoyment of heavenly happineſs.

Here I would ſhew that holineſs is abſolutely neceſſary, and that the conſideration of its neceſſity may ſtrongly enforce the purſuit of it.

The neceſſity of holineſs appears from the unchangeable appointment of heaven, and the nature of things.

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1. The unchangeable appointment of God excludes all the unholy from the kingdom of heaven; ſee 1 Cor. ix. 6. Rev. xxi. 27. Pſalm v. 4, 5. 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15. It is moſt aſtoniſhing that many who profeſs to believe the divine authority of the ſcriptures, will yet indulge vain hopes of heaven, in oppoſition to the plaineſt declarations of eternal truth. But though there were no poſitive conſtitution excluding the unholy from heaven, yet,

2. The very nature of things excludes ſinners from heaven; that is, it is impoſſible in the nature of things, that, while they are unholy, they could receive happineſs from the employments and entertainments of the heavenly world. If theſe conſiſted in the affluence of thoſe things which ſinners delight in here; if its enjoyments were earthly riches, pleaſures and honours; if its employments were the amuſements of the preſent life, then they might be happy there, as far as their ſordid natures are capable of happineſs. But theſe trifles have no place in heaven. The felicity of that ſtate conſiſts in the contemplation of the divine perfections, and there diſplays in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; hence is it deſcribed by ſeeing the Lord, Matt. v. 8. and as a ſtate of knowledge, 1 Cor. xiii. 10—12. in the ſatisfaction reſulting thence, Pſalm xvii. 15. and a complacency in God as a portion, Pſalm lxxiii. 25, 26. and in perpetual ſerving and praiſing the Lord; and hence adoration is generally mentioned as the employ of all the hoſts of heaven. Theſe are the entertainments of heaven, and they that cannot find ſupreme happineſs in theſe, cannot find it in heaven. But it is evident theſe things could afford no ſatisfaction to an unholy perſon. He would pine away at the heavenly feaſt, for want of appetite for the entertainment; an holy God would be an object of horror rather than delight to him, and his ſervice would be a wearineſs, as it is now. Hence it appears, that if we do not place our ſupreme delight in theſe things here, we cannot be

Theſe commotions and perturbations have had one good effect upon me, and that is, they have carried away my thoughts of late into a ſerene and peaceful region, a region beyond the reach of confuſion and violence; I mean the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. And thither, my brethren, I would alſo tranſport your minds this day, as the beſt refuge from this boiſterous world, and the moſt agreeable manſion for the lovers of peace and tranquillity. I find it advantageous both to you and myſelf, to entertain you with thoſe ſubjects that have made the deepeſt impreſſion upon my own mind: and this is the reaſon why I chooſe the preſent ſubject. In my text you hear one entering a claim to a kingdom, whom you would conclude, if you regarded only his outward appearance, to be the meaneſt and vileſt of mankind. To hear a powerful prince, at the head of a victorious army, attended with all the royalties of his character, to hear ſuch an one claim the kingdom he had acquired by force of arms, would not be ſtrange. But here the deſpiſed Nazarene, rejected by his nation, forſaken by his followers, accuſed as the worſt of criminals, ſtanding defenceleſs at Pilate's bar, juſt about to be condemned and hung on a croſs, like a malefactor and a ſlave, here he ſpeaks in a royal ſtile, even to his judge, *I am a King:* for this purpoſe *was I born*; *and for this cauſe came I into the world.* Strange language indeed to proceed from his lips in theſe circumſtances! But the truth is, a great, a divine perſonage is concealed under this diſguiſe; and his kingdom is of ſuch a nature, that his abaſement and crucifixion were ſo far from being a hindrance to it, that they were the only way to acquire it. Theſe ſufferings were meritorious; and by theſe he purchaſed his ſubjects, and a right to rule them.

The occaſion of theſe words was this: the unbelieving Jews were determined to put Jeſus to death as an impoſtor. The true reaſon of their oppoſition to him was, that he had ſeverely expoſed their hypocriſy,

criſy, claimed the character of the Meſſiah, without anſwering their expectations as a temporal prince and a mighty conqueror; and introduced a new religion, which ſuperſeded the law of Moſes, in which they had been educated. But this reaſon they knew would have but little weight with Pilate the Roman governor, who was an heathen, and had no regard to their religion. They therefore bring a charge of another kind, which they knew would touch the governor very ſenſibly, and that was, that Chriſt had ſet himſelf up as the King of the Jews; which was treaſon againſt Cæſar the Roman emperor, under whoſe yoke they then were. This was all pretence and artifice. They would now ſeem to be very loyal to the emperor, and unable to bear with any claims inconſiſtent with his authority; whereas, in truth, they were impatient of a foreign government, and were watching for any opportunity to ſhake it off. And had Chriſt been really guilty of the charge they alledged againſt him, he would have been the more acceptable to them. Had he ſet himſelf up as King of the Jews, in oppoſition to Cæſar, and employed his miraculous powers to make good his claim, the whole nation would have welcomed him as their deliverer, and flocked round his ſtandard. But Jeſus came not to work a deliverance of this kind, nor to erect ſuch a kingdom as they deſired, and therefore they rejected him as an impoſtor. This charge, however, they bring againſt him, in order to carry their point with the heathen governor. They knew he was zealous for the honour and intereſt of Cæſar his maſter; and Tiberius, the then Roman emperor, was ſo jealous a prince, and kept ſo many ſpies over his governors in all the provinces, that they were obliged to be very circumſpect, and ſhew the ſtricteſt regard for his rights, in order to eſcape degradation, or a ſeverer puniſhment. It was this that determined Pilate, in the ſtruggle with his conſcience, to condemn the innocent Jeſus. He was afraid the Jews would inform againſt him, as diſmiſſing one that

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ſet up as the rival of Cæſar; and the conſequence of this he well knew. The Jews were ſenſible of this, and therefore they inſiſt upon this charge, and at length plainly tell him, *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend.* Pilate therefore, who cared but little what innovations Chriſt ſhould introduce into the Jewiſh religion, thought proper to inquire into this matter, and aſks him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" doſt thou indeed claim ſuch a character, which may interfere with Cæſar's government? Jeſus replies, *My kingdom is not of this world*; as much as to ſay, "I do not deny that I claim a kingdom, but it is of ſuch a nature, that it need give no alarm to the kings of the earth. Their kingdoms are of this world, but mine is ſpiritual and divine,* and therefore cannot interfere with theirs. If my kingdom were of this world, like theirs, I would take the ſame methods with them to obtain and ſecure it; my ſervants would fight for me, that I ſhould not be delivered to the Jews; but now, you ſee, I uſe no ſuch means for my defence, or to raiſe me to my kingdom: and therefore you may be aſſured, my kingdom is not from hence, and can give the Roman emperor no umbrage for ſuſpicion or uneaſineſs." Pilate anſwers to this purpoſe: Thou doſt, however, ſpeak of a kingdom; and *art thou a king then?* doſt thou in any ſenſe claim that character? The poor priſoner boldly replies, *Thou ſayeſt that I am a king*; that is, "Thou haſt ſtruck upon the truth: I am indeed a king in a certain ſenſe, and nothing ſhall conſtrain me to renounce the title." *To this end was I born, and for this cauſe came I into the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs to the truth*; "particularly to this truth, which now looks ſo unlikely, namely, that

* Domitian, the Roman emperor, being apprehenſive that Chriſt's earthly relations might claim a kingdom in his right, inquired of them concerning the nature of his kingdom, and when and where it ſhould be ſet up. They replied, "It was not earthly, but heavenly and angelical, and to be ſet up at the end of the world."—Οὐ κοσμικὴ μὲν ἐδὲ ἐπιγεία· ἐρανία δὲ καὶ ἀγγελικὴ τυγχάνει ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῆ αἰῶνος σεισομένη. Euſeb. Eccl. Hiſt. lib. iii. chap. 20.

that I am really a king. I was born to a kingdom and a crown, and came into the world to take poſſeſſion of my right." This is that great confeſſion which St. Paul tells us, 2 Tim. vi. 13. our Lord witneſſed before Pontius Pilate. Neither the hopes of deliverance, nor the terrors of death, could cauſe him to retract it, or renounce his claim.

In proſecuting this ſubject I intend only to inquire into the nature and properties of the kingdom of Chriſt. And in order to render my diſcourſe the more familiar, and to adapt it to the preſent ſtate of our country, I ſhall conſider this kingdom in contraſt with the kingdoms of the earth, with which we are better acquainted.

The ſcriptures repreſent the Lord Jeſus under a great variety of characters, which, though inſufficient fully to repreſent him, yet in conjunction aſſiſt us to form ſuch exalted ideas of this great perſonage, as mortals can reach. He is a Surety, that undertook and paid the dreadful debt of obedience and ſuffering, which ſinners owed to the divine juſtice and law: He is a Prieſt, a great High Prieſt, that once offered himſelf as a ſacrifice for ſin; and now dwells in his native heaven, at his Father's right hand, as the advocate and interceſſor of his people: He is a Prophet, who teaches his church in all ages by his word and ſpirit: He is the ſupreme and univerſal Judge, to whom men and angels are accountable; and his name is Jeſus, a Saviour, becauſe he ſaves his people from their ſins. Under theſe auguſt and endearing characters he is often repreſented. But there is one character under which he is uniformly repreſented, both in the Old and New Teſtament, and that is, that of a King, a great King, inveſted with univerſal authority. And upon his appearance in the fleſh, all nature, and eſpecially the goſpel-church, is repreſented as placed under him, as his kingdom. Under this idea the Jews were taught by their prophets to look for him; and it was their underſtanding theſe predictions of ſome illuſtri-

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ous king that ſhould riſe from the houſe of David, in a literal and carnal ſenſe, that occaſioned their unhappy prejudices concerning the Meſſiah as a ſecular prince and conqueror. Under this idea the Lord Jeſus repreſented himſelf while upon earth, and under this idea he was publiſhed to the world by his apoſtles. The greateſt kings of the Jewiſh nation, particularly David and Solomon, were types of him; and many things are primarily applied to them, which have their complete and final accompliſhment in him alone. It is to him ultimately we are to apply the ſecond pſalm: *I have ſet my king*, ſays Jehovah, *upon my holy hill of Zion. Aſk of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion.* Pſalm ii. 6, 8. If we read the ſeventy-ſecond pſalm we ſhall eaſily perceive that one greater than Solomon is there. *In his days ſhall the righteous flouriſh; and abundance of peace ſo long as the moon endureth. All kings ſhall fall down before him; all nations ſhall ſerve him. His name ſhall continue for ever; his name ſhall endure as long as the ſun: and men ſhall be bleſſed in him; and all nations ſhall call him bleſſed.* Pſalm lxxii. 7, 11, 17. The hundred and tenth pſalm is throughout a celebration of the kingly and prieſtly office of Chriſt united. *The Lord*, ſays David, *ſaid unto my Lord*, unto that divine perſon who is my Lord, and will alſo be my Son, *ſit thou at my right hand*, in the higheſt honour and authority, *until I make thine enemies thy footſtool.*—Rule thou in the midſt of thine enemies. *Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power*, and ſubmit to thee in crowds as numerous as the drops of morning dew. Pſalm cx. 1—3. The evangelical prophet Iſaiah is often tranſported with the foreſight of this illuſtrious King, and the glorious kingdom of his grace: *Unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given; and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder; and* he *ſhall be called—the Prince of Peace. Of the increaſe of his government and peace there ſhall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his king-*

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dom, to order and to eſtabliſh it with judgment and with juſtice, from henceforth even for ever. Iſa. ix. 6, 7. This is he who is deſcribed as another David in Ezekiel's prophecy, *Thus ſaith the Lord, I will take the children of Iſrael from among the heathen. And I will make them one nation—and one king ſhall be king to them all*—even *David my ſervant ſhall be king over them.* Ezek. xxxvii. 21, 22, 24. This is the kingdom repreſented to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, as *a ſtone cut out without hands, which became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.* And Daniel, in expounding the dream, having deſcribed the Babylonian, the Perſian, the Grecian, and Roman empires, ſubjoins, *In the days of theſe kings*, that is, of the Roman emperors, *ſhall the God of heaven ſet up a kingdom, which ſhall never be deſtroyed: and the kingdom ſhall not*, like the former, *be left to other people; but it ſhall break in pieces and conſume all theſe kingdoms, and it ſhall ſtand for ever.* Dan. ii. 34, 35, 44. There is no character which our Lord ſo often aſſumed in the days of his fleſh as that of the Son of Man; and he no doubt alludes to a majeſtic viſion in Daniel, the only place where this character is given him in the Old Teſtament: *I ſaw in the night viſions*, ſays Daniel, *and behold, one like the Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days, and there was given to him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, ſhould ſerve him: his dominion is an everlaſting dominion, which ſhall not paſs away, and his kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed*, Dan. vii. 13, 14. like the tottering kingdoms of the earth, which are perpetually riſing and falling. This is the king that Zechariah refers to when, in proſpect of his triumphant entrance into Jeruſalem, he calls the inhabitants to give a proper reception to ſo great a Prince. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; ſhout, O daughter of Jeruſalem: behold thy King coming unto thee*, &c. Zech. ix. 9. Thus the prophets conſpire to aſcribe royal titles and a glorious kingdom to the Meſſiah. And theſe early and plain

notices of him raiſed a general expectation of him under this royal character. It was from theſe prophecies concerning him as a king, that the Jews took occaſion, as I obſerved, to look for the Meſſiah as a temporal prince; and it was a long time before the apoſtles themſelves were delivered from theſe carnal prejudices. They were ſolicitous about poſts of honour in that temporal kingdom which they expected he would ſet up: and even after his reſurrection they cannot forbear aſking him, *Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore again the kingdom to Iſrael?* Acts i. 6. that is, "Wilt thou now reſtore the Jews to their former liberty and independency, and deliver them from their preſent ſubjection to the Romans?" It was under this view that Herod was alarmed at his birth, and ſhed the blood of ſo many innocents, that he might not eſcape. He was afraid of him as the heir of David's family and crown, who might diſpoſſeſs him of the government; nay, he was expected by other nations under the character of a mighty king; and they no doubt learned this notion of him from the Jewiſh prophecies, as well as their converſation with that people. Hence the Magi, or eaſtern wiſemen, when they came to pay homage to him upon his birth, inquired after him in this language,—"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Matt. ii. 2. And what is ſtill more remarkable, we are told by two heathen hiſtorians, that about the time of his appearance a general expectation of him under this character prevailed through the world. "Many," ſays Tacitus, "had a perſuaſion that it was contained in the ancient writings of the prieſts, that at that very time the eaſt ſhould prevail, and that ſome deſcendant from Judah ſhould obtain the univerſal government."* Suetonius ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe: "An old and conſtant opinion," ſays he, "commonly prevailed through all the

* Fluribus perſuaſio inerat, antiquis ſacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipſo tempore fore, ut valeſcerat oriens, profectique Judeâ rerum potirentur. Tacit. Hiſt. l. 5. p. 621.

the eaſt, that it was in the fates, that ſome ſhould riſe out of Judea who ſhould obtain the government of the world."* This royal character Chriſt himſelf aſſumed, even when he converſed among mortals in the humble form of a ſervant. "*The Father*, ſays he, *has given me power over all fleſh.* John xvii. 2. Yea, *all power in heaven and earth is given to me.* Matt. xxviii. 13. The goſpel-church which he erected is moſt commonly called the kingdom of heaven or of God, in the evangeliſts: and when he was about to introduce it, this was the proclamation: *The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Under this character alſo his ſervants and diſciples celebrated and preached him. Gabriel led the ſong in foretelling his birth to his mother. *He ſhall be great, and the Lord ſhall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he ſhall reign over the houſe of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there ſhall be no end.* Luke i. 32, 33. St. Peter boldly tells the murderers of Chriſt, *God hath made that ſame Jeſus whom you crucified, both Lord and Chriſt*, Acts ii. 36. *and exalted him, with his own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour.* Acts v. 31. And St. Paul repeatedly repreſents him as advanced *far above principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come: and that God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to his church.* Eph. i. 21, 22. Phil. ii. 9—11. Yea, to him all the hoſts of heaven, and even the whole creation in concert, aſcribe *power and ſtrength, and honour and glory.* Rev. v. 12. Pilate the heathen was over-ruled to give a kind of accidental teſtimony to this truth, and to publiſh it to different nations, by the inſcription upon the croſs in the three languages then moſt in uſe, the Latin,

* Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus & conſtans opinio, eſſe in fatis, ut eo tempore Judeâ profecti rerum potirentur. Suet. in Veſp. c. 4. The ſameneſs of the expectation is remarkably evident, from the ſameneſs of the words in which theſe two hiſtorians expreſs it. *Judeâ profecti rerum potirentur.* It was not only a common expectation, but it was commonly expreſſed in the ſame language.

Latin, Greek, and Hebrew: *This is Jeſus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*; and all the remonſtrances of the Jews could not prevail upon him to alter it. Finally, it is he that wears *upon his veſture, and upon his thigh, this name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords*, Rev. xix. 16. and as his name is, ſo is he.

Thus you ſee, my brethren, by theſe inſtances, ſelected out of many, that the kingly character and dominion of our Lord Jeſus runs through the whole Bible. That of a king is his favourite character in which he glories, and which is the moſt expreſſive of his office. And this conſideration alone may convince you that this character is of the greateſt importance, and worthy of your moſt attentive regard.

It is the mediatorial kingdom of Chriſt that is here intended, not that which as God he exerciſes over all the works of his hands: it is that kingdom which is an empire of grace, an adminiſtration of mercy over our guilty world. It is the diſpenſation intended for the ſalvation of fallen ſinners of our race by the goſpel; and on this account the goſpel is often called the kingdom of heaven; becauſe its happy conſequences are not confined to this earth, but appear in heaven in the higheſt perfection, and laſt through all eternity. Hence, not only the church of Chriſt on earth, and the diſpenſation of the goſpel, but all the ſaints in heaven, and that more finiſhed œconomy under which they are placed, are all included in the kingdom of Chriſt. Here his kingdom is in its infancy, but in heaven is arrived to perfection; but it is ſubſtantially the ſame. Though the immediate deſign of this kingdom is the ſalvation of believers of the guilty race of man, and ſuch are its ſubjects in a peculiar ſenſe; yet it extends to all worlds, to heaven, and earth, and hell. The whole univerſe is put under a mediatorial head; but then, as the apoſtle obſerves, *he is made head over all things to his church*, Eph. i. 22. that is, for the benefit and ſalvation of his church. As Mediator he is carrying on a glorious ſcheme for the recovery

covery of man, and all parts of the univerſe are intereſted or concern themſelves in this grand event; and therefore they are all ſubjected to him, that he may ſo manage them as to promote this end, and baffle and overwhelm all oppoſition. The elect angels rejoice in ſo benevolent a deſign for peopling their manſions, left vacant by the fall of ſo many of their fellow-angels, with colonies tranſplanted from our world, from a race of creatures that they had given up for loſt. And therefore Chriſt, as a Mediator, is made the head of all the heavenly armies, and he employs them as *his miniſtering ſpirits, to miniſter to them that are heirs of ſalvation.* Heb. i. 14. Theſe glorious creatures are always on the wing ready to diſcharge his orders in any part of his vaſt empire, and delight to be employed in the ſervices of his mediatorial kingdom. This is alſo an event in which the fallen angels deeply intereſt themſelves; they have united all their force and art for near ſix thouſand years to diſturb and ſubvert his kingdom, and blaſt the deſigns of redeeming love; they therefore are all ſubjected to the controul of Chriſt, and he ſhortens and lengthens their chains as he pleaſes, and they cannot go an hair's breadth beyond his permiſſion. The ſcriptures repreſent our world in its ſtate of guilt and miſery as the kingdom of Satan; ſinners, while ſlaves to ſin, are his ſubjects; and every act of diſobedience againſt God is an act of homage to this infernal prince. Hence Satan is called *the God of this world,* 2 Cor. iv. 4. *the prince of this world,* John xii. 31. *the power of darkneſs,* Luke xxii. 53. *the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience.* Eph. ii. 3. And ſinners are ſaid to be *taken captive by him at his will.* 2. Tim. ii. 26. Hence alſo the miniſters of Chriſt, who are employed to recover ſinners to a ſtate of holineſs and happineſs, are repreſented as ſoldiers armed for war; not indeed with carnal weapons, but with thoſe which are ſpiritual, plain truth arguments, and miracles; and *theſe are made mighty through God to*

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the pulling down of ſtrong holds, caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt. 2 Cor. x. 3, 4, 5. And chriſtians in general are repreſented as *wreſtling, not with fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſſes in high places.* Eph. vi. 12. Hence alſo in particular it is that the death of Chriſt is repreſented not as a defeat, but as an illuſtrious conqueſt gained over the powers of hell; becauſe, by this means a way was opened for the deliverance of ſinners from under their power, and reſtoring them into liberty and the favour of God. By that ſtrange contemptible weapon, the croſs, and by the glorious reſurrection of Jeſus, he *ſpoiled principalities and powers, and made a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them.* Col. ii. 15. *Through death*, ſays the apoſtle, *he deſtroyed him that had the power of death; that is, the devil.* Heb. ii. 14. Had not Chriſt by his death offered a propitiatory ſacrifice for the ſins of men, they would have continued for ever under the tyranny of Satan; but he has purchaſed liberty, life, and ſalvation for them; and thus he hath deſtroyed the kingdom of darkneſs, and tranſlated multitudes from it into his own gracious and glorious kingdom.

Hence, upon the right of redemption, his mediatorial authority extends to the infernal regions, and he controuls and reſtrains thoſe malignant, mighty, and turbulent potentates, according to his pleaſure. Farther, the inanimate world is connected with our Lord's deſign to ſave ſinners, and therefore is ſubjected to him as Mediator. He cauſes the ſun to riſe, the rain to fall, and the earth to yield her increaſe, to furniſh proviſion for the ſubjects of his grace, and to raiſe, ſupport and accommodate heirs for his heavenly kingdom. As for the ſons of men, who are more immediately concerned in this kingdom, and for whoſe ſake it was erected, they are all its ſubjects; but then they

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are of different ſorts, according to their characters. Multitudes are rebels againſt his government; that is, they do not voluntarily ſubmit to his authority, nor chuſe they to do his ſervice: they will not obey his laws. But they are his ſubjects notwithſtanding; that is, he rules and manages them as he pleaſes, whether they will or not. This power is neceſſary to carry on ſucceſsfully his gracious deſign towards his people; for unleſs he had the management of his enemies, they might baffle his undertaking, and ſucceſsfully counteract the purpoſes of his love. The kings of the earth, as well as vulgar rebels of a private character, have often ſet themſelves againſt his kingdom, and ſometimes they have flattered themſelves they had entirely demoliſhed it.* But Jeſus reigns abſolute and ſupreme over the kings of the earth, and over-rules and controuls them as he thinks proper; and he diſpoſes all the revolutions, the riſes and falls of kingdoms and empires, ſo as to be ſubſervient to the great deſigns of his mediation; and their united policies and powers cannot fruſtrate the work which he has undertaken. But beſides theſe rebellious involuntary ſubjects, he has (bleſſed be his name!) gained the conſent of thouſands, and they have become his willing ſubjects by their own choice. They regard his authority, they love his government, they make it their ſtudy to pleaſe him, and to do his will. Over theſe he exerciſes a government of ſpecial grace here, and he will make them the happy ſubjects of the kingdom of his glory hereafter. And it is his government over theſe that I intend more particularly to conſider. Once more, the kingdom of Jeſus is not confined to this world, but all the millions of mankind in the inviſible world are under his dominion, and will continue ſo to everlaſting ages. *He is the Lord of the dead and the living*, Rom. xiv. 9. and has the keys of Hades, the vaſt inviſible

* In the 10th and laſt Roman perſecution, *Dioclefian* had a medal ſtruck with this inſcription, "The chriſtian name demoliſhed, and the worſhip of the gods reſtored."

viſible world (including heaven as well as hell) and of death. Rev. i. 18. It is he that turns the key, and opens the door of death for mortals to paſs from world to world: it is he that opens the gates of heaven, and welcomes and admits the nations that keep the commandments of God: and it is he that opens the priſon of hell, and locks it faſt upon the priſoners of divine juſtice. He will for ever exerciſe authority over the vaſt regions of the unſeen world, and the unnumbered multitudes of ſpirits with which they are peopled. You hence ſee, my brethren, the univerſal extent of the Redeemer's kingdom; and in this reſpect how much does it differ from all the kingdoms of the earth? The kingdoms of Great-Britain, France, China, Perſia, are but little ſpots of the globe. Our world has indeed been oppreſſed in former times with what mortals call univerſal monarchies; ſuch were the Babylonian, the Perſian, the Grecian, and eſpecially the Roman. But in truth, theſe were ſo far from being ſtrictly univerſal, that a conſiderable part of the habitable earth was not ſo much as known to them. But this is an empire ſtrictly univerſal. It extends over land and ſea; it reaches beyond the planetary worlds, and all the luminaries of heaven; nay, beyond the throne of the moſt exalted archangels, and downward to the loweſt abyſs in hell. An univerſal empire in the hands of a mortal is an huge, unwieldy thing; an heap of confuſion; a burthen to mankind; and it has always ruſhed headlong from its glory, and fallen to pieces by its own weight. But Jeſus is equal to the immenſe province of an empire ſtrictly univerſal: his hand is able to hold the reins; and it is the bleſſing of our world to be under his adminiſtration. He will turn what appears to us ſcenes of confuſion into perfect order, and convince all worlds that he has not taken one wrong ſtep in the whole plan of his infinite government.

The kingdoms of the world have their laws and ordinances, and ſo has the kingdom of Chriſt. Look into

into your Bibles, and there you will find the laws of this kingdom, from its firſt foundation immediately upon the fall of man. The laws of human governments are often defective or unrighteous; but theſe are perfect, holy, juſt, and good. Human laws are enforced with ſanctions; but the rewards and puniſhments can only affect our mortal bodies, and cannot reach beyond the preſent life: but the ſanctions of theſe divine laws are eternal, and there never ſhall be an end to their execution. Everlaſting happineſs and everlaſting miſery, of the moſt exquiſite kind and the higheſt degree, are the rewards and puniſhments which the immortal King diſtributes among his immortal ſubjects; and they become his character, and are adapted to their nature.

Human laws extend only to outward actions, but theſe laws reach the heart, and the principle of action within. Not a ſecret thought, not a motion of the ſoul, is exempted from them. If the ſubjects of earthly kings obſerve a decorum in their outward conduct, and give no viſible evidence of diſloyalty, they are treated as good ſubjects, though they ſhould be enemies in their hearts. "But Jeſus is the Lord of ſouls;" he makes his ſubjects bow their hearts as well as the knee to him. He ſweetly commands their thoughts and affections as well as their external practice, and makes himſelf inwardly beloved as well as outwardly obeyed. His ſubjects are ſuch on whom he may depend: they are all ready to lay down their lives for him. Love, cordial, unfeigned, ardent love, is the principle of all their obedience; and hence it is that his commandments are not grievous, but delightful to them.

Other kings have their miniſters and officers of ſtate. In like manner Jeſus employs the armies of heaven as miniſtering ſpirits in his mediatorial kingdom: beſides theſe he has miniſters, of an humbler form, who negociate more immediately in his name with mankind. Theſe are intruſted with the miniſtry

of reconciliation, to beſeech men, in his ſtead, to be reconciled to God. Theſe are appointed to preach his word, to adminiſter his ordinances, and to manage the affairs of his kingdom. This view gives a peculiar dignity and importance to this office. Theſe ſhould be adorned, not like the miniſters of earthly courts, with the trappings of gold and ſilver, but with the beauties of holineſs, the ornament of a meek and quiet, zealous and faithful ſpirit, and a life becoming the goſpel of Chriſt.

Other kings have their ſoldiers: ſo all the legions of the elect angels, the armies of heaven, are the ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt, and under his command. This he aſſerted when he was in ſuch defenceleſs circumſtances, that he ſeemed to be abandoned by heaven and earth. "I could pray to my Father, ſays he, and he would ſend *me more than twelve legions of angels.* Matt. xxvi. 53. I cannot forbear reading to you one of the moſt majeſtic deſcriptions of this all-conquering hero and his army, which the language of mortality is capable of. Rev. xix. 11. 16. *I ſaw heaven open*, ſays St. John, *and behold a white horſe*, an emblem of victory and triumph, *and he that ſat upon him was called Faithful and True.* How different a character from that of mortal conquerors! "And in righteouſneſs he doth judge and make war." War is generally a ſcene of injuſtice and lawleſs violence; and thoſe plagues of mankind we call heroes and warriors, uſe their arms to gratify their own avarice or ambition, and make encroachments upon others. Jeſus, the Prince of Peace, makes war too, but it is in righteouſneſs; it is in the cauſe of righteouſneſs he takes up arms. The divine deſcription proceeds: *His eyes were as a flame of fire; and on his head were many crowns*, emblems of his manifold authority over the various kingdoms of the world, and the various regions of the univerſe. *And he was clothed with a veſture dipt in blood*, in the blood of his enemies; *and his name was called, The Word of God: and the armies*

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which were in heaven, followed him upon white horſes, clothed in fine linen, white and clean: the whiteſt innocence and purity, and the beauties of holineſs are, as it were, the uniform, the regimentals of theſe celeſtial armies. *And out of his mouth goeth a ſharp ſword, that with it he ſhould ſmite the nations: and he ſhall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine preſs of the fierceneſs and wrath of Almighty God; and he hath on his veſture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.* In what manner the war is carried on between the armies of heaven and the powers of hell, we know not; but that there is really ſomething of this kind, we may infer from *Rev.* xii. 7, 9. *There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought againſt the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was there place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was caſt out, that old ſerpant called the Devil and Satan.*

Thus you ſee all the hoſt of heaven are volunteers under the Captain of our ſalvation. Nay, he marſhals the ſtars, and calls them by their names. *The ſtars in their courſes,* ſays the ſublime Deborah, *fought againſt Siſera,* the enemy of God's people. *Judges* v. 20. Every part of the creation ſerves under him, and he can commiſſion a gnat, or a fly, or the meaneſt inſect, to be the executioner of his enemies. Fire and water, hurricanes and earthquakes; earthquakes which have ſo lately ſhattered ſo great a part of our globe, now tottering with age, and ready to fall to pieces, and bury the guilty inhabitants in its ruins, all theſe fight under him, and conſpire to avenge his quarrel with the guilty ſons of men. The ſubjects of his grace in particular are all ſo many ſoldiers; their life is a conſtant warfare; and they are inceſſantly engaged in hard conflict with temptations from without, and the inſurrections of ſin from within. Sometimes, alas! they fall; but their General lifts them up again, and inſpires them with ſtrength to renew

renew the fight. They fight moſt ſucceſsfully upon their knees. This is the moſt advantageous poſture for the ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt; for prayer brings down recruits from heaven in the hour of difficulty. They are indeed but poor weaklings and invalids; and yet they overcome, through the blood of the Lamb; and he makes them conquerors, yea more than conquerors. It is the military character of chriſtians that gives the apoſtle occaſion to addreſs them in the military ſtile, like a general at the head of his army. *Eph.* vi. 10—18. *Be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breaſtplate of righteouſneſs, and your feet ſhod with the preparation of the goſpel of peace; above all, taking the ſhield of faith, wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of ſalvation, and the ſword of the ſpirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and ſupplication.* The miniſters of the goſpel in particular, and eſpecially the apoſtles, are ſoldiers, or officers, in this ſpiritual army. Hence St. Paul ſpeaks of his office, in the military ſtile; *I have*, ſays he, *fought the good fight.* 2 Tim. iv. 7. *We war*, ſays he, *though it be not after the fleſh.* The humble doctrines of the croſs are our weapons, and theſe *are mighty* through God, *to demoliſh the ſtrong holds of the prince of darkneſs*, and to *bring every thought into* a joyful *captivity to the obedience of faith.* 2 Cor. x. 3—5. *Fight the good fight*, ſays he to Timothy. 1 *Tim.* vi. 12. And again, *thou therefore endure hardneſs, as a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Tim. ii. 3. The great deſign of the goſpel-miniſtry is to reſcue enſlaved ſouls from the tyranny of ſin and Satan, and to recover them into a ſtate of liberty and loyalty to Jeſus Chriſt; or, in the words of the apoſtle, *to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Acts xxvi. 18. Mortals indeed are very unequal for the conflict;

flict; but their ſucceſs more conſpicuouſly ſhews that the *excellency of the power is of God:* and many have they ſubdued, through his ſtrength, to the obedience of faith, and made the willing captives of the croſs of our divine Immanuel. Other kingdoms are often founded in blood, and many lives are loſt on both ſides in acquiring them. The kingdom of Chriſt, too, was founded in blood; but it was the blood of his own heart: life was loſt in the conflict; but it was his own; his own life loſt, to purchaſe life for his people. Others have waded to empire through the blood of mankind, and even of their own ſubjects, but Chriſt ſhed only his own blood to ſpare that of his ſoldiers. The general devotes his life as a ſacrifice to ſave his army. The Fabii and Decii of Rome, who devoted themſelves for their country, were but faint ſhadows of this divine bravery. O! the generous patriotiſm, the ardent love of the Captain of our ſalvation! How amiable does his character appear, in contraſt with that of the kings of the earth! They often ſacrifice the lives of their ſubjects, while they keep themſelves out of danger, or perhaps are rioting at eaſe in the pleaſures and luxuries of a court; but Jeſus engaged in the conflict with death and hell alone. He ſtood a ſingle champion in a field of blood. He conquered for his people by falling himſelf: he ſubdued his and their enemies by reſigning himſelf to their power. Worthy is ſuch a general to be Commander in Chief of the hoſts of God, and to lead the armies of heaven and earth! Indeed much blood has been ſhed in carrying on this kingdom. The earth has been ſoaked with the blood of the ſaints; and millions have reſiſted even unto blood, ſtriving againſt ſin, and nobly laid down their lives for the ſake of Chriſt and a good conſcience. Rome has been remarkably the ſeat of perſecution; both formerly under the Heathen Emperors, and in latter times, under a ſucceſſion of Popes, ſtill more bloody and tyrannical. There were no leſs than ten general perſecutions under the Heathen Em-

perors,

perors, through the vaſt Roman empire, in a little more than two hundred years, which followed one another in a cloſe ſucceſſion; in which innumerable multitudes of chriſtians loſt their lives by an endleſs variety of tortures. And ſince the church of Rome has uſurped her authority, the blood of the ſaints has hardly ever ceaſed running in ſome country or other; though, bleſſed be God, many kingdoms ſhook off the yoke at the ever-memorable period of the Reformation, above two hundred years ago; which has greatly weakened that perſecuting power. This is that myſtical Babylon which was repreſented to St. John as *drunken with the blood of the ſaints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jeſus.* Rev. xvii. 6. In her was found the blood of the prophets, and of the ſaints, and of all that were ſlain upon the earth. *ch.* xviii. 24. And theſe ſcenes of blood are ſtill perpetrated in France, that plague of Europe, that has of late ſtretched her murderous arm acroſs the wide ocean to diſturb us in theſe regions of peace. There the Proteſtants are ſtill plundered, chained to the gallies, broken alive upon the torturing wheel, denied the poor favour of abandoning their country and their all, and flying naked to beg their bread in other nations. Thus the harmleſs ſubjects of the Prince of Peace have ever been ſlaughtered from age to age, and yet they are repreſented as triumphant conquerors. Hear a poor perſecuted Paul on this head: *In tribulation, in diſtreſs, in perſecution, in nakedneſs, in peril and ſword, we are conquerors, we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.* Rom. viii. 36, 37. *Thanks be to God who always cauſeth us to triumph in Chriſt.* 2 Cor. ii. 14. *Whatſoever is born of God,* ſays the Evangeliſt, *overcometh the world.* 1 John v. 4. Whence came that glorious army which we ſo often ſee in the Revelation? We are told, *they came out of great tribulation.* ch. vii. 14. *And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their teſtimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.* ch. xii. 11. They that ſuffered tortures and death

death under the beaſt, are ſaid *to have gotten the victory over him.* ch. xv. 2. Victory and triumph ſound ſtrange when thus aſcribed;—but the goſpel helps us to underſtand this myſtery. By theſe ſufferings they obtained the illuſtrious crown of martyrdom, and peculiar degrees of glory and happineſs through an endleſs duration. Their death was but a ſhort tranſition from the loweſt and more remote regions of their Redeemer's kingdom into his immediate preſence and glorious court in heaven. A temporal death is rewarded with an immortal life; and *their light afflictions, which were but for a moment, wrought out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* 2 Cor. iv. 17. Even in the agonies of torture their ſouls were often filled with ſuch delightful ſenſations of the love of God, as ſwallowed up the ſenſations of bodily pain; and a bed of flames was ſweeter to them than a bed of roſes. Their ſouls were beyond the reach of all the inſtruments of torment; and as to their bodies they ſhall yet have a glorious reſurrection to a bleſſed immortality. And now I leave you to judge, whether they or their enemies got the victory in this conflict; and which had moſt cauſe to triumph. Like their Maſter, they roſe by falling; they triumphed over their enemies by ſubmitting, like lambs, to their power. If the ſoldiers of other generals die in the field, it is not in the power of their commanders to reward them. But the ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt, by dying, are, as it were, carried in triumph from the field of blood into the preſence of their Maſter, to receive his approbation, and a glorious crown. Death puts them into a capacity of receiving and enjoying greater rewards than they are capable of in the preſent ſtate. And thus it appears, that his ſoldiers always win the day; or, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, he *cauſes them always to triumph*; and not one of them has ever been or ever ſhall be defeated, however weak and helpleſs in himſelf, and however terrible the power of his enemies. —And O! when all theſe warriors meet at length from

from every corner of the earth, and, as it were, paſs in review before their General in the fields of heaven, with their robes waſhed in his blood, with palms of victory in their hands, and crowns of glory on their heads, all dreſſed in uniform with garments of ſalvation, what a glorious army will they make! and how will they cauſe heaven to ring with ſhouts of joy and triumph!

The founders of earthly kingdoms are famous for their heroic actions. They have braved the dangers of ſea and land, routed powerful armies, and ſubjected nations to their will. They have ſhed rivers of blood, laid cities in ruins, and countries in deſolation. Theſe are the exploits which have rendered the Alexanders, the Cæſars, and other conquerors of this world, famous through all nations and ages. Jeſus had his exploits too; but they were all of the gracious and beneficent kind. His conqueſts were ſo many deliverances, and his victories ſalvations. He ſubdued, in order to ſet free; and made captives to deliver them from ſlavery. He conquered the legions of hell, that ſeemed let looſe at that time, that he might have opportunity of diſplaying his power over them, and that mankind might be ſenſible how much they needed a deliverer from their tyranny.—He triumphed over the temptations of Satan in the wilderneſs, by a quotation from his own word. He reſcued wretched creatures from his power by an almighty command. He conquered the moſt inveterate and ſtubborn diſeaſes, and reſtored health and vigour with a word of his mouth. He vanquiſhed ſtubborn ſouls with the power of his love, and made them his willing people. He triumphed over death, the king of terrors, and delivered Lazarus from the priſon of the grave, as an earneſt and firſt-fruits of a general reſurrection. Nay, by his own inherent powers he broke the bonds of death, and forced his way to his native heaven. He deſtroyed him that had the power of death, *i. e.* the devil, by his own death, and laid the foundation

foundation in his own blood for deſtroying his uſurped kingdom, and forming a glorious kingdom of willing ſubjects redeemed from his tyranny.

The death of ſome great conquerors, particularly of Julius Cæſar, is ſaid to be prognoſticated or attended with prodigies: but none equal to thoſe which ſolemnized the death of Jeſus. The earth trembled, the rocks were burſt to pieces, the vail of the temple was rent, the heavens were clothed in mourning, and the dead ſtarted into life. And no wonder, when the Lord of nature was expiring upon a croſs. He ſubdued and calmed the ſtormy wind, and the boiſterous waves of the ſea. In ſhort, he ſhewed an abſolute ſovereignty over univerſal nature, and managed the moſt unruly elements with a ſingle word. Other conquerors have gone from country to country, carrying deſolation along with them; Jeſus went about doing good. His miraculous powers were but powers of miraculous mercy and beneficence. He could eaſily have advanced himſelf to a temporal kingdom, and routed all the forces of the earth; but he had no ambition of this kind. He that raiſed Lazarus from the grave could eaſily reſtore his ſoldiers to vigour and life, after they had been wounded or killed. He that fed five thouſand with five loaves and two fiſhes, could have ſupported his army with plenty of proviſion in the greateſt ſcarcity. He that walked upon the boiſterous ocean, and enabled Peter to do the ſame, could eaſily have tranſported his forces from country to country, without the conveyance of ſhips. Nay, he was capable by his own ſingle power to have gained univerſal conqueſt. What could all the armies of the earth have done againſt him, who ſtruck an armed company down to the earth with only a word of his mouth? But theſe were not the victories he affected: Victories of grace, deliverances for the oppreſſed, ſalvation for the loſt; theſe were his heroic actions. He glories in his being mighty to ſave. Iſaiah lxiii. 1. When his warm diſciples made a motion that he ſhould

employ his miraculous powers to puniſh the Samaritans who ungratefully refuſed him entertainment, he rebuked them, and anſwered like the Prince of Peace, *The Son of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave.* Luke ix. 56. *He came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt.* Luke xix. 10. O how amiable a character this! How much more lovely the Saviour of ſinners, the Deliverer of ſouls, than the enſlavers and deſtroyers of mankind; which is the general character of the renowned heroes of our world? Who has ever performed ſuch truly heroic and brave actions as this almighty conqueror? He has pardoned the moſt aggravated crimes, in a conſiſtency with the honours of the divine government: he has delivered an innumerable multitude of immortal ſouls from the tyranny of ſin and the powers of hell, ſet the priſoners free, and brought them into the liberty of the Son of God; he has peopled heaven with redeemed ſlaves, and advanced them to royal dignity. *All his ſubjects are kings.* Rev. i. 6. *To him that overcometh*, ſays he, *will I grant to ſit with me in my throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my father in his throne.* Rev. iii. 21. They ſhall all be adorned with royal robes and crowns of unfading glory. They are advanced to empire over their luſts and paſſions, and all their enemies. Who ever gave ſuch encouragement to his ſoldiers as this, *If we ſuffer with him, we know we ſhall alſo reign with him?* 2 Tim. ii. 12. What mortal general could beſtow immortality and perfect happineſs upon his favourites? But theſe boundleſs bleſſings Jeſus has to beſtow. In human governments merit is often neglected, and thoſe who ſerve their country beſt are often rewarded with degradation. But none have ever ſerved the King of kings in vain. The leaſt good action, even the giving a cup of water to one of his neceſſitous ſaints, ſhall not paſs unrewarded in his government.

Other kings have their arms, their ſwords, their cannon, and other inſtruments of deſtruction; and with theſe they acquire and defend their dominions. Jeſus, our

our king, has his arms too, but O! of how different a kind! The force of evidence and conviction in his doctrine, atteſted with miracles, the energy of his dying love, the gentle, and yet efficacious influence of his holy ſpirit; theſe are the weapons with which he conquered the world. His goſpel is the great magazine from whence his apoſtles, the firſt founders of his kingdom, drew their arms; and with theſe they ſubdued the nations to the obedience of faith. *The goſpel*, ſays St. Paul, *is the power of God unto ſalvation.* Rom. i. 16. The humble doctrines of the croſs became almighty, and bore down all before them, and after a time ſubdued the vaſt Roman empire which had ſubdued the world. The holy ſpirit gave edge and force to theſe weapons; and, bleſſed be God, though they are quite impotent without his aſſiſtance, yet when he concurs they are ſtill ſucceſsful. Many ſtubborn ſinners have been unable to reſiſt the preaching of Chriſt crucified: they have found him indeed the power of God. And is it not aſtoniſhing that any one ſhould be able to ſtand it out againſt his dying love, and continue the enemy of his croſs? *I*, ſays he, *if I be lifted up from the earth*, i. e, if I be ſuſpended on the croſs, *will draw all men unto me.* John xii. 32. You ſee he expected his croſs would be an irreſiſtible weapon. And O! bleſſed Jeſus, who can ſee thee expiring there in agonies of torture and love; who can ſee thy blood guſhing in ſtreams from every vein, who can hear thee there, and not melt into ſubmiſſion at thy feet! Is there one heart in this aſſembly proof againſt the energy of this bleeding, agonizing, dying love? Methinks ſuch a ſight muſt kindle a correſpondent affection in your hearts towards him; and it is an exploit of wickedneſs, it is the laſt deſperate effort of an impenetrable heart, to be able to reſiſt.

Other conquerors march at the head of their troops, with all the enſigns of power and grandeur, and their forces numerous, inured to war, and well armed: and from ſuch appearances and preparations who is there but

but what expects victory? But ſee the deſpiſed Nazarene, without riches, without arms, without forces, conflicting with the united powers of earth and hell; or ſee a company of poor fiſhermen and a tent-maker, with no other powers but thoſe of doing good, with no other arms but thoſe of reaſon, and the ſtrange unpopular doctrines of a crucified Chriſt! ſee the profeſſed followers of a maſter that was hung like a malefactor and a ſlave, ſee theſe men marching out to encounter the powers of darkneſs, the whole ſtrength of the Roman empire, the luſts, prejudices, and intereſts of all nations, and travelling from country to country, without guards, without friends, expoſed to inſult and contempt, to the rage of perſecution, to all manner of tormented deaths which earth or hell could invent: ſee this little army marching into the wide world, in theſe circumſtances, and can you expect they will have any ſucceſs? Does this appear a promiſing expedition? No; human reaſon would forebode they will ſoon be cut in pieces, and the chriſtian cauſe buried with them. But theſe unpromiſing champions, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, conquered the world, and ſpread the religion of the crucified Jeſus among all nations. It is true they loſt their lives in the cauſe, like brave ſoldiers; but the cauſe did not die with them. Their blood proved the ſeed of the church. Their cauſe is immortal and invincible. Let devils in hell, let Heathens, Jews, and Mahometans, let Atheiſts, Free-thinkers, Papiſts, and perſecutors of every character, do their worſt; ſtill this cauſe will live in ſpite of them. All the enemies of Chriſt will be obliged to confeſs at laſt, with Julian the apoſtate Roman emperor, who exerted all his art to abolish chriſtianity; but, when mortally wounded in battle, outrageouſly ſprinkled his blood towards heaven, and cried out, *Viciſti, O Galilæe!* "Thou haſt conquered, O Galilean!" Yes, my brethren, Jeſus, the Prophet of Galilee, will puſh his conqueſts from country to country, until all nations ſubmit to him. And, bleſſed be his name, his victorious arm has reached to

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us in theſe ends of the earth: here he has ſubdued ſome obſtinate rebels, and made their reluctant ſouls willingly bow in affectionate homage to him. And may I not produce ſome of you as the trophies of his victory? Has he not rooted out the enmity of your carnal minds, and ſweetly conſtrained you to the moſt affectionate obedience? Thus, bleſſed Jeſus! thus go on conquering, and to conquer. *Gird thy ſword upon thy thigh, O moſt mighty!* and in thy glory and majeſty ride proſperouſly through our land, and make this country a dutiful province of the dominion of thy grace. My brethren, ſhould we all become his willing ſubjects, he would no longer ſuffer the perfidious ſlaves of France, and their ſavage allies, to chaſtiſe and puniſh us for our rebellion againſt him; but *peace ſhould again run down like a river, and righteouſneſs like a mighty ſtream.*

The kingdoms of the world have their riſe, their progreſs, perfection, declenſion, and ruin. And in theſe things, the kingdom of Chriſt bears ſome reſemblance to them, excepting that it ſhall never have an end.

Its riſe was ſmall at firſt, and it has paſſed through many revolutions in various ages. It was firſt founded in the family of Adam, but in about 1600 years, the ſpace between the creation and the flood, it was almoſt demoliſhed by the wickedneſs of the world; and at length confined to the little family of Noah. After the flood, the world ſoon fell into idolatry, but, that this kingdom of Chriſt might not be deſtroyed quite, it was erected in the family of Abraham; and among the Jews it continued until the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh. This was indeed but the infancy of his kingdom, and indeed is ſeldom called by that name. It is the goſpel conſtitution that is repreſented as the kingdom of Chriſt, in a ſpecial ſenſe. This was but very ſmall and unpromiſing at firſt. When its Founder was dying upon Calvary, and all his followers had forſaken him and fled, who would have thought it would ever have come to any thing, ever have recovered? But it revived with him; and, when he furniſhed his apoſtles with gifts

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and graces for their miſſion, and ſent them forth to increaſe his kingdom, it made its progreſs through the world with amazing rapidity, notwithſtanding it met with very early and powerful oppoſition. The Jews ſet themſelves againſt it, and raiſed perſecutions againſt its miniſters, wherever they went. And preſently the tyrant Nero employed all the power of the Roman empire to cruſh them. Peter, Paul, and thouſands of the chriſtians fell a prey to his rage, like ſheep for the ſlaughter. This perſecution was continued under his ſucceſſors, with but little interruption, for about two hundred years.

But, under all theſe preſſures, the church bore up her head; yea, the more ſhe was trodden, the more ſhe ſpread and flouriſhed; and at length ſhe was delivered from oppreſſion by Conſtantine the Great, about the year 320. But now ſhe had a more dangerous enemy to encounter, I mean proſperity: and this did her much more injury than all the perſecutions of her enemies. Now the kingdom of Chriſt began to be corrupted with hereſies: the miniſtry of the goſpel, formerly the moſt dangerous poſts in the world, now became a place of honour and profit, and men began to thruſt themſelves into it from principles of avarice and ambition; ſuperſtition and corruption of morals increaſed; and at length the Biſhop of Rome ſet up for univerſal head of the church in the year 606, and gradually the whole monſtrous ſyſtem of popery was formed and eſtabliſhed, and continued in force for near a thouſand years. The kingdom of Chriſt was now at a low ebb; and tyranny and ſuperſtition reigned under that name over the greateſt part of the chriſtian world. Nevertheleſs our Lord ſtill had his witneſſes. The Waldenſes and Albigenſes, John Hus, and Jerome of Prague, and Wickliffe in England, oppoſed the torrent of corruption; until at length, Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, and ſeveral others, were made the honoured inſtruments of introducing the Reformation from popery; when ſundry whole kingdoms, which had

had given their power to the beaſt, and particularly our mother-country, ſhook off the papal authority, and admitted the pure light of the goſpel. Since that time the kingdom of Chriſt has ſtruggled hard, and it has loſt ground in ſeveral countries; particularly in France, Poland, Bohemia, &c. where there once were many Proteſtant churches; but they are now in ruins. And, alas! thoſe countries that ſtill retain the reformed religion, have too generally reduced it into a mere formality; and it has but little influence upon the hearts and lives even of its profeſſors. Thus we find the caſe remarkably among us. This gracious kingdom makes but little way in Virginia. The calamities of war and famine cannot, alas! draw ſubjects to it; but we ſeem generally determined to periſh in our rebellion rather than ſubmit. Thus it has been in this country from its firſt ſettlement; and how long it will continue in this ſituation is unknown to mortals: however, this we may know, it will not be ſo always. We have the ſtrongeſt aſſurances that Jeſus will yet take to him his great power, and reign in a more extenſive and illuſtrious manner than he has ever yet done; and that the kingdoms of the earth ſhall yet become *the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt.* There are various parts of the heathen world where the goſpel has never yet been; and the Jews have never yet been converted as a nation; but both the calling of the Jews and the fulneſs of the Gentiles, you will find plainly foretold in the 11th chapter to the Romans; and it is, no doubt, to render the accompliſhment of this event the more conſpicuous, that the Jews, who are diſperſed all over the world, have, by a ſtrange, unprecedented, and ſingular providence, been kept a diſtinct people to this day, for 1700 years; though all other nations have been ſo mixt and blended together, who were not half ſo much diſperſed into different countries, that their diſtinct original cannot be traced. Poſterity ſhall ſee this glorious event in ſome happy future period. How far it is from us, I will

will not determine: though, upon ſome grounds, I apprehend it is not very remote. I ſhall live and die in the unſhaken belief that our guilty world ſhall yet ſee glorious days. Yes, my brethren, this deſpiſed goſpel, that has ſo little effect in our age and country, ſhall yet ſhine like lightning, or like the ſun, through all the dark regions of the earth. It ſhall triumph over Heatheniſm, Mahometiſm, Judaiſm, Popery, and all thoſe dangerous errors that have infected the chriſtian church. This goſpel, poor negroes, ſhall yet reach your countrymen, whom you left behind you in Africa, in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death, and bleſs your eyes with the light of ſalvation: and the Indian ſavages, that are now ravaging our country, ſhall yet be transformed into lambs and doves by the goſpel of peace. The ſcheme of Providence is not yet completed, and much remains to be accompliſhed of what God has ſpoken by his prophets, to ripen the world for the univerſal judgment; but when all theſe things are finiſhed, then proclamation ſhall be made through all nature, "That Time ſhall be no more:" then the Supreme Judge, the ſame Jeſus that aſcended the croſs, will aſcend the throne, and review the affairs of time: then will he put an end to the preſent courſe of nature, and the preſent form of adminiſtration. Then ſhall heaven and hell be filled with their reſpective inhabitants: then will time cloſe, and eternity run on in one uniform tenor, without end. But the kingdom of Chriſt, though altered in its ſituation and form of government, will not then come to a concluſion. His kingdom is ſtrictly the kingdom of heaven; and at the end of this world, his ſubjects will only be removed from theſe lower regions into a more glorious country, where they and their King ſhall live together for ever in the moſt endearing intimacy; where the noiſe and commotions of this reſtleſs world, the revolutions and perturbations of kingdoms, the terrors of war and perſecution, ſhall no more reach them; but all will be perfect peace, love, and happineſs,

neſs, through immeaſurable duration. This is the laſt and moſt illuſtrious ſtate of the kingdom of Chriſt, now ſo ſmall and weak in appearance: this is the final grand reſult of his adminiſtration; and it will appear to admiring worlds wiſely planned, gloriouſly executed, and perfectly finiſhed.

What conqueror ever erected ſuch a kingdom! What ſubjects ſo completely, ſo laſtingly happy, as thoſe of the bleſſed Jeſus!

SERMON XI.

Things unſeen to be preferred to Things ſeen.

2 Cor. iv. 18. *While we look not at the Things which are ſeen, but at the Things which are not ſeen; for the Things which are ſeen are temporal: but the Things which are not ſeen are eternal.*

AMONG all the cauſes of the ſtupid unconcernedneſs of ſinners about religion, and the feeble endeavours of ſaints to improve in it, there is none more common or more effectual, than their not forming a due eſtimate of the things of time in compariſon of thoſe of eternity. Our preſent affairs engroſs all our thoughts, and exhauſt all our activity, though they are but tranſitory trifles; while the awful realities of the future world are hid from our eyes by the veil of fleſh and the clouds of ignorance. Did theſe break in upon our minds in all their almighty evidence and tremendous importance, they would annihilate the moſt majeſtic vanities of the preſent ſtate, obſcure the glare of earthly glory, render all its pleaſures inſipid, and give us a noble inſenſibility under all its ſorrows. A realizing view of theſe would ſhock the libertine in

his thoughtleſs career, tear off the hypocrite's maſk, and inflame the devotion of languiſhing ſaints. The concern of mankind would then be how they might make a ſafe *exit* out of this world, and not how they may live happy in it. Preſent pleaſure and pain would be ſwallowed up in the proſpect of everlaſting happineſs or miſery hereafter. Eternity, awful eternity, would then be our ſerious contemplation. The pleaſures of ſin would ſtrike us with horror, if they iſſue in eternal pain, and our preſent afflictions, however tedious and ſevere, would appear but light and momentary, if they work out for us *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

Theſe were the views the apoſtle had of things, and theſe their effects upon him. He informs us in this chapter of his unwearied zeal to propagate the goſpel amidſt all the hardſhips and dangers that attended the painful diſcharge of his miniſtry. Though he bore about in his body the dying of the Lord Jeſus, though he was always delivered unto death for Jeſus' ſake, yet he fainted not; and this was the proſpect that animated him, that his *light affliction, which was but for a moment, would work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* When we view his ſufferings abſolutely, without any reference to eternity, they were very heavy and of many years continuance; and when he repreſents them in this view, how moving is the relation! ſee 2 *Cor.* xi. 23—29. But when he views them in the light of eternity, and compared with their glorious iſſues, they ſink into nothing; then ſcourging, ſtoning, impriſonment, and all the various deaths to which he was daily expoſed, are but light, trifling afflictions, hardly worth naming; then a ſeries of uninterrupted ſufferings for many years are but afflictions that endure for a moment. And when he views a glorious futurity, human language cannot expreſs the ideas he has of the happineſs reſerved for him; it is *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:* a noble ſentiment! and expreſt in the ſublimeſt manner the language of mortals can admit of. It

It is glory, in oppoſition to affliction; a weight of glory, in oppoſition to light affliction; a maſſy oppreſſive bleſſedneſs, which it requires all the powers in the ſoul, in their full exertion, to ſupport: and in oppoſition to affliction for a moment, it is eternal glory: to finiſh all, it is a *far more exceeding glory.** What greater idea can be graſped by the human mind, or expreſſed in the feeble language of mortality! Nothing but feeling that weight of glory could enlarge his conception; and nothing but the dialect of heaven could better expreſs it. No wonder that, with this view of things, *he ſhould reckon that the ſufferings of the preſent life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed.* Rom. viii. 18.

The apoſtle obſerves, that he formed this eſtimate of things, while he looked not at the "things which are ſeen, but at thoſe which are not ſeen." By the things that are ſeen, are meant the preſent life, and all the things of time; all the pleaſures and pains, all the labours, purſuits, and amuſements of the preſent ſtate. By the things that are not ſeen, are intended all the inviſible realities of the eternal world; all the beings, the enjoyments and ſufferings that lie beyond the reach of human ſight; as the great Father of ſpirits, the joys of paradiſe, and the puniſhments of hell. We look on theſe inviſible things, and not on thoſe that are ſeen. This ſeems like a contradiction; but it is eaſily ſolved by underſtanding this act, deſcribed by looking, to be the act not of the bodily eye, but of faith and enlightened reaſon. Faith is defined by this apoſtle to be *the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen.* Heb. xi. 1. And it is the apoſtle's chief deſign in that chapter, to give inſtances of the ſurpriſing efficacy of ſuch a realizing belief of eternal inviſible things; ſee particularly ver. 10, 13, 14, 16, 25, 26, 27. Hence to look not at viſible, but inviſible

* The original far ſurpaſſes the beſt tranſlation. The adjective abſolute (τὸ ὑλαφρὸν τῆς θλίψεως) is very ſignificant; and καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν is inimitable in our language.

ble things, ſignifies that the apoſtle made the latter the chief objects of his contemplations, that he was governed in the whole of his conduct by the impreſſion of eternal things, and not by the preſent; that he formed his maxims and ſchemes from a comprehenſive ſurvey of futurities, and not from a partial view of things preſent; and, in ſhort, that he acted as an expectant of eternity, and not as an everlaſting inhabitant of this wretched world. This he elſewhere expreſſes in equivalent terms, *We walk by faith, and not by ſight.* 2 Cor. v. 7.

Further, he aſſigns a reaſon why he had a greater regard to inviſible things than viſible in the regulating of his conduct; *for the things which are ſeen are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen,* ſays he, *are eternal.* An important reaſon indeed! Eternity annexed to a trifle would advance it into infinite importance, but when it is the attribute of the moſt perfect happineſs, or of the moſt exquiſite miſery, then it tranſcends all compariſon: then all temporal happineſs and miſery, however great and long continued, ſhrink into nothing, is drowned and loſt, like the ſmall drop of a bucket in the boundleſs ocean.

My preſent deſign, and the contents of the text, preſcribe to me the following method:

I. I ſhall give you a comparative view of viſible and inviſible things, that you may ſee the trifling nature of the one, and the importance of the other. This I chooſe to do under one head, becauſe by placing theſe two claſſes of things in an immediate oppoſition, we may the more eaſily compare them, and ſee their infinite diſparity. And,

II. I ſhall ſhew you the great and happy influence a ſuitable impreſſion of the ſuperior importance of inviſible to viſible things would have upon us.

I. I ſhall give you a comparative view of viſible and inviſible things; and we may compare viſible and inviſible things, as to their intrinſic value, and as to their duration.

1. As

1. As to their intrinſic value; and in this reſpect the diſparity is inconceivable.

This I ſhall illuſtrate in the two comprehenſive inſtances of pleaſure and pain. To ſhun the one, and obtain the other, is the natural effort of the human mind. This is its aim in all its endeavours and purſuits. The innate deſire of happineſs and averſion to miſery are the two great ſprings of all human activity; and, were theſe ſprings relaxed or broken, all buſineſs would ceaſe, all activity would ſtagnate, and univerſal torpor would ſeize the world. And theſe principles are co-exiſtent with the ſoul itſelf, and will continue in full vigour in a future ſtate. Nay, as the ſoul will then be matured, and all its powers arrived to their complete perfection, this eagerneſs after happineſs, and averſion to miſery, will be alſo more quick and vigorous. The ſoul in its preſent ſtate of infancy, like a young child, or a man enfeebled and ſtupified by ſickneſs, is incapable of very deep ſenſations of pleaſure and pain; and hence an exceſs of joy, as well as ſorrow, has ſometimes diſſolved its feeble union with the body. On this account we are incapable of ſuch degrees of happineſs or miſery from the things of this world as beings of more lively ſenſations might receive from them: and much more are we incapable of the happineſs or miſery of the future world, until we have put on immortality. We cannot ſee God and live. Should the glory of heaven blaze upon us in all its inſuperable ſplendour, it would overwhelm our feeble nature; we could not ſupport ſuch a weight of glory. And one twinge of the agonies of hell would diſlodge the ſoul from its earthly manſion: one pang would convulſe and ſtupify it, were not its powers ſtrengthened by the ſeparation from the body. But in the future world all the powers of the ſoul will be mature and ſtrong, and the body will be clothed with immortality; the union between them after the reſurrection will be inſeparable, and able to ſupport the moſt oppreſſive weight of glory, or the moſt intolerable load of torment. Hence it follows that pleaſure and

pain

pain include all that we can deſire or fear in the preſent or future world; and therefore a comparative view of preſent and future pleaſure and pain is ſufficient to enable us to form a due eſtimate of viſible and inviſible things. By preſent pleaſure, I mean all the happineſs we can receive from preſent things, as from riches, honours, ſenſual gratifications, learning, and intellectual improvements, and all the amuſements and exerciſes of this life. And by future pleaſure, or the pleaſure which reſults from inviſible things, I mean all the fruitions and enjoyments in which heavenly happineſs conſiſts. By preſent pain, I intend all the uneaſineſs which we can receive from the things of the preſent life; as poverty, loſſes, diſappointments, bereavements, ſickneſs, and bodily pains. And by future pain, I mean all the puniſhments of hell; as baniſhment from God, and a privation of all created bleſſings, the agonizing reflections of a guilty conſcience, the horrid company and exprobations of infernal ghoſts, and the torture of infernal flames.

Now let us put theſe in the balance, and the one will ſink into nothing, and the other riſe into infinite importance.

Temporal things are of a contracted nature, and not adequate to the capacities of the human ſoul; but eternal things are great, and capable of communicating all the happineſs and miſery which it can receive. The ſoul in its preſent ſtate is not capable of ſuch degrees of happineſs and miſery as it will be in the future, when it dwells among inviſible realities. All that pleaſure and pain which we receive from things that are ſeen, is intermingled with ſome ingredients of a contrary nature; but thoſe proceeding from things that are not ſeen, are pure and unmingled.

1. Viſible things are not equal to the capacities of the human ſoul. This little ſpark of being, the ſoul, which lies obſcured in this priſon of fleſh, gives frequent diſcoveries of ſurpriſing powers: its deſires in particular have a kind of infinity. But all temporary objects

objects are mean and contracted; they cannot afford it a happineſs equal to its capacity, nor render it as miſerable as its capacity of ſuffering will bear. Hence, in the greateſt affluence of temporal enjoyments, in the midſt of honours, pleaſures, riches, friends, &c. it ſtill feels a painful void within, and finds an unknown ſomething wanting to complete its happineſs. Kings have been unhappy upon their thrones, and all their grandeur have been but majeſtic miſery. So Solomon found it, who had opportunity and curioſity to make the experiment; and this is his verdict upon all earthly enjoyments, after the moſt impartial trial, "Vanity of vanities," ſaith the preacher, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of ſpirit." On the other hand, the ſoul may poſſeſs ſome degree of happineſs, under all the miſeries it is capable of ſuffering from external and temporal things. Guilt indeed denies it this ſupport; but if there be no inteſtine broils, no anguiſh reſulting from its own reflections, not all the viſible things can render it perfectly miſerable; its capacity of ſuffering is not put to its utmoſt ſtretch. This has been atteſted by the experience of multitudes who have ſuffered for righteouſneſs ſake. But, O, when we take a ſurvey of inviſible things, we find them all great and majeſtic, not only equal but infinitely ſuperior to the moſt enlarged powers of the human and even of the angelic nature. In the eternal world the great Inviſible dwells, and there he acts with his own immediate hand. It is he that immediately communicates happineſs through the heavenly regions; and it is his immediate breath that, like a ſtream of brimſtone, kindles the flames of hell: whereas in the preſent world he rarely communicates happineſs, and inflicts puniſhment, but by the inſtrumentality of creatures; and it is impoſſible the extremes of either ſhould be communicated through this channel. This the infinite God alone can do, and, though in the future world he will uſe his creatures to heighten the happineſs or miſery of each other, yet he will have a more immediate agency in them himſelf.

ſelf. He will communicate happineſs immediately from himſelf, the infinite fountain of it, into the veſſels of mercy: and he will immediately ſhew his wrath, and make his power known upon the veſſels of wrath. I may add, that thoſe creatures, angels and devils, which will be the inſtruments of happineſs or miſery to the human ſoul in the inviſible world, are incomparably more powerful than any in this; and conſequently capable of contributing more to our pleaſure or pain. And let me alſo obſerve, that all the objects about which our faculties will be employed then, will be great and majeſtic; whereas, at preſent, we grovel among little ſordid things. The objects of our contemplation will then be either the unveiled glories of the divine nature, and the naked wonders of creation, providence, and redemption; or the terrors of divine juſtice, the dreadful nature and aggravations of our ſin, the horrors of everlaſting puniſhment, &c. And ſince this is the caſe, how little ſhould we regard the things that are ſeen, in compariſon of them that are not ſeen? But though viſible things were adequate to our preſent capacities, yet they are not to be compared with the things that are not ſeen, becauſe,

2. The ſoul is at preſent in a ſtate of infancy, and incapable of ſuch degrees of pleaſure or pain as it can bear in the future world. The enjoyments of this life are like the play-things of children; and none but childiſh ſouls would trifle with them, or fret and vex themſelves or one another about them; but the inviſible realities before us are manly and great, and ſuch as an adult ſoul ought to concern itſelf with. The ſoul in another world can no more be happy or miſerable from ſuch toys, than men can be happy or wretched in the poſſeſſion or loſs of the baubles of children; it will then demand great things to give it pleaſure or pain. The apoſtle illuſtrates this matter in this manner. 1. Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 11. How fooliſh is it then to be chiefly governed by theſe puerilities, while we neglect the manly concern of eternity, that can make

our

our ſouls perfectly happy or miſerable, when their powers are come to perfection!

3. And laſtly, All the happineſs and miſery of the preſent ſtate, reſulting from things that are ſeen, are intermingled with contrary ingredients. We are never ſo happy in this world, as to have no uneaſineſs; in the greateſt affluence we languiſh for want of ſome abſent good, or grieve under ſome incumbent evil. On the other hand, we are never ſo miſerable as to have no ingredient of happineſs. When we labour under a thouſand calamities, we may ſtill ſee ourſelves ſurrounded with, perhaps, an equal number of bleſſings. And where is there a wretch ſo miſerable as to endure ſimple unmingled miſery without one comfortable ingredient? But in the inviſible world there is an eternal ſeparation made between good and evil, pleaſure and pain; and they ſhall never mingle more. In heaven the rivers of pleaſures flow untroubled with a drop of ſorrow; in hell, there is not a drop of water to mitigate the fury of the flame. And who then would not prefer the things that are not ſeen to thoſe that are ſeen? Eſpecially, if we conſider,

2. The infinite diſparity between them as to duration. This is the difference paticularly intended in the text; *the things that are ſeen are temporal; but the things that are not ſeen are eternal.*

The tranſitorineſs of viſible things, implies, both that the things themſelves are periſhable, and they may ſoon leave us; and that our reſidence among them is temporary, and we muſt ſoon leave them.

And the eternity of inviſible things implies the quite contrary, that the things themſelves are of endleſs duration; and that we ſhall always exiſt to receive happineſs or miſery from them.

Before we illuſtrate theſe inſtances of diſparity, let us take a view of Time and Eternity in themſelves, and as compared to one another.

Time is the duration of creatures in the preſent ſtate. It commenced at the creation, and near 6000 years of

it are ſince elapſed; and how much of it yet remains we know not. But this we know, that the duration of the world itſelf is as nothing in compariſon of eternity. But what is our duration compared with the duration even of this world? It is but a ſpan, an hair's breadth: ſixty, ſeventy, or eighty years, is generally the higheſt ſtandard of human life, and it is by far the ſmalleſt number of mankind that arrives to theſe periods. The moſt of them die like a flower blaſted in the morning, or at noon; and we have more reaſon to expect it will be our fate than to hope the contrary. Now the ſpan of time we enjoy in life is all our time; we have no more property in the reſt of it than in the years before the flood. All beſide is eternity. "Eternity!" We are alarmed at the ſound! Loſt in the proſpect! Eternity with reſpect to God, is a duration without beginning as well as without end: Eternity, as it is the attribute of human nature, is a duration that had a beginning but ſhall never have an end. This is inalienably entailed upon us poor dying worms: and let us ſurvey our inheritance. Eternity! it is a duration that excludes all number and computation; days, and months, and years, yea, and ages are loſt in it, like drops in the ocean. Millions of millions of years, as many years as there are ſands on the ſea ſhore, or particles of duſt in the globe of the earth, and theſe multiplied to the higheſt reach of number, all theſe are nothing to eternity. They do not bear the leaſt imaginable proportion to it; for theſe will come to an end, as certain as a day; but eternity will never, never come to an end. It is a line without end; it is an ocean without a ſhore. Alas! what ſhall I ſay of it! It is an infinite unknown ſomething, that neither human thought can graſp, nor human language deſcribe.

Now place time in compariſon with eternity, and what is it? It ſhrinks into nothing, and leſs than nothing. What then is that little ſpan of time in which we have any property? Alas! it is too diminutive a point to be conceived. Indeed, properly ſpeaking,

ſpeaking, we can call no part of time our own but the preſent moment, this fleeting *now:* future time is uncertain, and we may never enjoy it; the breath we now reſpire may be our laſt; and as to our paſt time, it is gone, and will never be ours again. Our paſt days are dead and buried, though perhaps guilt, their ghoſt, may haunt us ſtill. And what is a moment to eternity? The diſparity is too great to admit of compariſon.

Let me now reſume the former particulars, implied in the tranſitorineſs of viſible and eternity of inviſible things.

Viſible things are periſhable, and may ſoon leave us. When we think they are ours, they often fly from our embrace. Riches may vaniſh into ſmoke and aſhes by an accidental fire. We may be thrown down from the pinnacle of honour, and ſink the lower into diſgrace. Senſual pleaſures often end in ſatiety and diſguſt, or in ſickneſs and death. Our friends are torn from our bleeding hearts by the inexorable hand of death. Our liberty and property may be wreſted from us by the hand of tyranny, oppreſſion, or fraud. In a word, what do we enjoy but we may loſe? On the other hand, our miſeries here are temporary; the heart receives many a wound, but it heals again. Poverty may end in riches; a clouded character may clear up, and from diſgrace we may riſe to honour; we may recover from ſickneſs; and if we loſe one comfort, we may obtain another. But in eternity every thing is everlaſting and unchangeable. Happineſs and miſery are both of them without end; and the ſubjects of both well know that this is the caſe. It is this perpetuity that finiſhes that happineſs of the inhabitants of heaven; the leaſt ſuſpicion of an end would intermingle itſelf with all their enjoyments, and embitter them; and the greater the happineſs, the greater the anxiety at the expectation of loſing it. But, O how tranſporting for the ſaints on high to look forward through the ſucceſſion of eternal ages, with an aſſurance that they ſhall be happy through them all, and that they ſhall feel no change but from glory to glory!

glory! On the other hand, this is the bittereſt ingredient in the cup of divine diſpleaſure in the future ſtate, that the miſery is eternal. O with what horror does that deſpairing cry, Forever, forever, forever! echo through the vaults of hell! Eternity is ſuch an important attribute, that it gives infinite weight to things that would be inſignificant, were they temporary. A ſmall degree of happineſs, if it be eternal, exceeds the greateſt degree that is tranſitory; and a ſmall degree of miſery that is everlaſting, of greater importance than the greateſt degree that ſoon comes to an end. Would you rather endure the moſt painful tortures that nature can bear for a moment, than an eternal tooth-ach or head-ach? Again, ſhould we conſider all the ingredients and cauſes of future happineſs and miſery, we ſhould find them all everlaſting. The bleſſed God is an inexhauſtible perennial fountain of bliſs; his image can never be eraſed from the hearts of glorified ſpirits; the great contemplation will always lie obvious to them; and they will always exiſt as the partakers and promoters of mutual bliſs. On the other hand, in hell the worm of conſcience dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; divine juſtice is immortal; malignant ſpirits will always exiſt as mutual tormentors, and their wicked habits will never be extirpated.

And now, need I offer any thing farther to convince you of the ſuperior importance of inviſible and eternal to viſible and temporary things? Can a rational creature be at a loſs to chooſe in ſo plain a caſe? Can you need any arguments to convince you that an eternity of the moſt perfect happineſs is rather to be choſen than a few years of ſordid unſatisfying delight? Or that the former ſhould not be forfeited for the ſake of the latter? Have you any remaining ſcruples, whether the little anxieties and mortifications of a pious life are more intolerable than everlaſting puniſhment? O! it is a plain caſe: what then mean an infatuated world, who lay out all their concern on temporal things, and neglect the important affairs of eternity? Let us illuſtrate this

matter

matter by a ſuppoſition. Suppoſe a bird were to pick up and carry away a grain of ſand or duſt from the globe of this earth once in a thouſand years, till it ſhould be at length wholly carried away; the duration which this would take up appears a kind of eternity to us. Now ſuppoſe it were put to our choice, either to be happy during this time, and miſerable ever after, or to be miſerable during this time, and happy ever after, which would you chooſe? Why, though this duration ſeems endleſs, yet he would be a fool that would not make the latter choice; for, O! behind this vaſt duration, there lies an eternity, which exceeds it infinitely more than this duration exceeds a moment. But we have no ſuch ſeemingly puzzling choice as this; the matter with us ſtands thus—Will you chooſe the little ſordid pleaſures of ſin that may perhaps not laſt an hour, at moſt not many years, rather than everlaſting pleaſure of the ſublimeſt kind? Will you rather endure intolerable torment forever, than painfully endeavour to be holy! What does your conduct, my brethren, anſwer to theſe queſtions? If your tongues reply, they will perhaps for your credit give a right anſwer; but what ſay your prevailing diſpoſition and common practice? Are you not more thoughtful for time than eternity? more concerned about viſible vanities than inviſible realities? If ſo, you make a fool's choice indeed.

But let it be further conſidered, that the tranſitorineſs of inviſible things may imply that we muſt ere long be removed from them. Though they were immortal it would be nothing to us, ſince we are not ſo in our preſent ſtate. Within a few years, at moſt, we ſhall be beyond the reach of all happineſs and miſery from temporal things.

But when we paſs out of this tranſitory ſtate, we enter upon an everlaſting ſtate. Our ſouls will always exiſt; exiſt in a ſtate of unchangeable, boundleſs happineſs or miſery. It is but a little while ſince we came into being out of a ſtate of eternal non-exiſtence; but we ſhall never relapſe into that ſtate again. Theſe little

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ſparks of being ſhall never be extinguiſhed; they will ſurvive the ruins of the world, and kindle into immortality. When millions of millions of ages are paſt, we ſhall ſtill be in exiſtence; and O! in what unknown region? In that of endleſs bliſs, or of interminable miſery! —Be this the moſt anxious inquiry of our lives!

Seeing then we muſt ſoon leave this world, and all its joys and ſorrows, and ſeeing we muſt enter on an unchangeable everlaſting ſtate of happineſs or miſery, be it our chief concern to end our preſent pilgrimage well. It matters but little whether we lie eaſy or not during this night of exiſtence, if ſo be we awake in eternal day. It is but a trifle, hardly worth a thought, whether we be happy or miſerable here, if we be happy for ever hereafter. What then mean the buſtle and noiſe of mankind about the things of time? O, ſirs! eternity, awful all-important eternity, is the only thing that deſerves a thought. I come,

II. To ſhew the great and happy influence a ſuitable impreſſion of the ſuperior importance of *inviſible* to viſible things would have upon us. This I might exemplify in a variety of inſtances with reſpect to ſaints and ſinners.

When we are tempted to any unlawful pleaſures, how would we ſhrink away with horror from the purſuit, had we a due ſenſe of the miſery incurred, and the happineſs forfeited by it!

When we find our hearts exceſſively eager after things below, had we a ſuitable view of eternal things, all theſe things would ſhrink into trifles hardly worth a thought, much leſs our principal concern.

When the ſinner, for the ſake of a little preſent eaſe, and to avoid a little preſent uneaſineſs, ſtifles his conſcience, refuſes to examine his condition, caſts the thoughts of eternity out of his mind, and thinks it too hard to attend painfully on all the means of grace, has he then a due eſtimate of eternal things? Alas! no; he only looks at the things that are ſeen. Were the mouth of hell open before him, that he might behold its tor-

ments,

ments, and had he a ſight of the joys of paradiſe, they would harden him into a generous inſenſibility of all the ſorrows and anxieties of this life, and his inquiry would not be, Whether theſe things required of him are eaſy? but, Whether they are neceſſary to obtain eternal happineſs, and avoid everlaſting miſery?

When we ſuffer any reproach or contempt on a religious account, how would a due eſtimate of eternal things fortify us with undaunted courage, and make us willing to climb to heaven through diſgrace, rather than ſink to hell with general applauſe!

How would a realizing view of eternal things animate us in our devotions? Were this thought impreſſed on our hearts when in the ſecret or ſocial duties of religion, "I am now acting for eternity," do you think we ſhould pray, read, or hear with ſo much indifferency and languor? O no; it would rouſe us out of our dead frames, and call forth all the vigour of our ſouls. With what unwearied importunity ſhould we cry to God! with what eagerneſs hear the word of ſalvation!

How powerful an influence would a view of futurity have to alarm the ſecure ſinner that has thought little of eternity all his life, though it be the only thing worth thinking of!

How would it haſten the determination of the lingering, wavering ſinner, and ſhock him at the thought of living one day unprepared on the very brink of eternity!

In a word, a ſuitable impreſſion of this would quite alter the aſpect of things in the world, and would turn the concern and activity of the world into another channel. Eternity then would be the principal concern. Our inquiries would not be, Who will ſhew us any temporal good? What ſhall we eat, or what ſhall we drink? But, What ſhall we do to be ſaved? How ſhall we eſcape the wrath to come? Let us then endeavour to impreſs our hearts with inviſible things, and for that purpoſe conſider, that

We ſhall, ere long, be ingulphed in this awful eternity, whether we think of it or not. A few days or years

years will launch us there; and O, the ſurpriſing ſcenes that will then open to us!—

Without deep impreſſions of eternity on our hearts, and frequent thoughtfulneſs about it, we cannot be prepared for it.

And if we are not prepared for it, O, how inconceivably miſerable our caſe! But if prepared, how inconceivably happy!

Look not then at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal: but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.

SERMON XII.

The Sacred Import of the Chriſtian Name.

Acts xi. 26. *The Diſciples were called Chriſtians firſt at Antioch.*

MERE names are empty ſounds, and but of little conſequence: and yet it muſt be owned there are names of honour and ſignificancy; and, when they are attended with the things ſignified by them, they are of great and ſacred importance. Such is the Chriſtian name; a name about ſeventeen hundred years old. And now, when the name is almoſt loſt in party-diſtinctions, and the thing is almoſt loſt in ignorance, error, vice, hypocriſy, and formality, it may be worth our while to conſider the original import of that ſacred name, as a proper expedient to recover both name and thing.

The name of Chriſtian was not the firſt by which the followers of Chriſt were diſtinguiſhed. Their enemies called them Galileans, Nazarenes, and other names of contempt: and among themſelves they were called Saints,

Saints, from their holineſs; Diſciples, from their learning their religion from Chriſt as their teacher; Believers, from their believing in him as the Meſſiah; and Brethren, from their mutual love and their relation to God and each other. But after ſome time they were diſtinguiſhed by the name of Chriſtians. This they firſt received in Antioch, an heathen city, a city infamous for all manner of vice and debauchery; a city that had its name from Antiochus Epiphanes, the bittereſt enemy the church of the Jews ever had. A city very rich and powerful, from whence the chriſtian name would have an extenſive circulation; but it is long ſince laid in ruins, unprotected by that ſacred name: in ſuch a city was Chriſt pleaſed to confer his name upon his followers: and you cannot but ſee that the very choice of the place diſcovers his wiſdom, grace, and juſtice.

The original word, which is here rendered *called*, ſeems to intimate, that they were called chriſtians by divine appointment, for it generally ſignifies an oracular nomination, or a declaration from God; and to this purpoſe it is generally tranſlated.* Hence it follows, that the very name chriſtian, as well as the thing, was a divine original; aſſumed not by a private agreement of the diſciples among themſelves, but by the appointment of God. And in this view it is a remarkable accompliſhment of an old prophecy of Iſaiah, chapter lxii. 2. *The Gentiles ſhall ſee thy righteouſneſs,*

* It is this word that is uſed, Matt. ii. 12. Καὶ χρηματισθέντες, being warned of God, and the like in Matt. ii. 22. So in Rom. xi. 4. χρηματισμὸς, is rendered the anſwer of God. Rom. vii. 3. χρηματίσει, ſhe ſhall be called (*viz.* by the divine law) an adultreſs. Luke ii. 26. χρηματισμοῦ, it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghoſt. Acts x. 22. ἐχρηματίσθη, was warned from God. Heb. viii. 5. Κεχρηματίσται Μωσῆς, Moſes was admoniſhed of God. Heb. xi. 7. Noah being warned of God, χρηματισθεὶς. Heb. xii. 25. If they eſcaped not, who refuſed Him that ſpake on earth; *viz.* by divine inſpiration; χρηματίζοντα ἐπὶ τῆς. Theſe are all the places perhaps in which the word is uſed in the New Teſtament; and in all theſe it ſeems to mean a revelation from God, or ſomething oracular. And this is a ſtrong preſumption that the word is to be ſo underſtood in the text.

and all Kings thy glory, and thou ſhalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord ſhall name. So *Iſaiah* lxv. 15. *The Lord ſhall call his ſervants by another name.*

This name was at firſt confined to few; but it ſoon had a ſurpriſingly extenſive propagation thro' the world. In many countries, indeed, it was loſt, and miſerably exchanged for that of Heathen, Mahometan, or Muſſulman. Yet the European nations ſtill retain the honor of wearing it. A few ſcattered chriſtians are alſo ſtill to be found here and there in Aſia and Africa, though cruſhed under the oppreſſions of Mahometans and Pagans. This name has likewiſe croſſed the wide ocean to the wilderneſs of America, and is worn by the ſundry European colonies on this continent. We, in particular, call ourſelves chriſtians, and ſhould take it ill to be denied the honour of that diſtinction. But do we not know the meaning and ſacred import of that name? Do we not know what it is to be chriſtains indeed? That is, to be in reality what we are in name: certainly it is time for us to conſider the matter; and it is my preſent deſign that we ſhould do ſo.

Now we may conſider this name in various views: particularly as a name of diſtinction from the reſt of the world, who know not the Lord Jeſus, or reject him as an impoſtor;—as a patronymic name, pointing out the Father and Founder of our holy religion and the chriſtain church;—as a badge of our relation to Chriſt as his ſervants, his children, his bride;—as intimating our unction by the holy ſpirit, or our being the ſubjects of his influences; as Chriſt was anointed by the holy ſpirit, or repleniſhed with his gifts above meaſure (for you are to obſerve that *anointed* is the Engliſh of the Greek name *Chriſt*, and of the Hebrew, *Meſſiah**): and as a name of appropriation, ſignifying that we are the property of Chriſt, and his peculiar people. Each of theſe particulars might be profitably illuſ-

* Pſalm cv. 15. Touch not my Chriſts; that is, my anointed people.—So the *Seventy*.

illuſtrated.* But my preſent deſign confines me to conſider the Chriſtian name only in two views; namely, as a catholic name, intended to bury all party denominations; and as a name of obligation upon all that wear it to be chriſtians indeed, or to form their temper and practice upon the ſacred model of chriſtianity.

I. Let us conſider the chriſtian name as a catholic name, intended to bury all party denominations.

The name Gentile was odious to the Jews, and the name Jew was odious to the Gentiles. The name chriſtian ſwallows up both in one common and agreeable appellation. He that hath taken down the partition-wall, has taken away partition-names, and untied all his followers in his own name, as a common denomination. For now, ſays Paul, *there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Chriſt is all and in all.* Col. iii. 11. And *ye are all one in Chriſt Jeſus.* Gal. iii. 28. According to a prophecy of Zechariah, *The Lord ſhall be king over all the earth; and in that day there ſhall be one Lord, and his name one.* Zech. xiv. 9.

It is but a due honour to Jeſus Chriſt, the founder of chriſtianity, that all who profeſs his religion ſhould wear his name: and they pay an extravagant and even idolatrous compliment to his ſubordinate officers and miniſters, when they take their denomination from them. Had this humour prevailed in the primitive church, inſtead of the common name chriſtians, there would have been as many party-names as there were apoſtles or eminent miniſters. There would have been Paulites from Paul; Peterites from Peter; Johnites from John; Barnabites from Barnabas, &c. Paul took pains to cruſh the firſt riſings of this party-ſpirit in thoſe churches which he planted; particularly in Corinth, where it moſt prevailed. While they were ſaying, *I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas;*

† See a fine illuſtration of them in Dr. Groſvenor's excellent Eſſay on the Chriſtian Name; from whom I am not aſhamed to borrow ſeveral amiable ſentiments.

phas; *and I of Chriſt*, he puts this pungent queſtion to them: "Is Chriſt divided? Are his ſervants the ringleaders of ſo many parties? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in or into the name of Paul, that ye ſhould be ſo fond to take your name from him? He counted it a happineſs that providence had directed him to ſuch a conduct as gave no umbrage of encouragement to ſuch a humour. *I thank God*, ſays he, *that I baptized none of you, but Criſpus and Gaius: leſt any ſhould take occaſion to ſay, I baptized into my own name, and was gathering a party for myſelf.* 1 Cor. i. 12—15.

But alas! how little has this convictive reaſoning of the apoſtle been regarded in the future ages of the church? What an endleſs variety of denominations taken from ſome men of character, or from ſome little peculiarities, has prevailed in the chriſtian world, and crumbled it to pieces, while the chriſtian name is hardly regarded? Not to take notice of Jeſuits, Janſeniſts, Dominicans, Franciſcans, and other denominations and orders in the popiſh church, where, having corrupted the thing, they act very conſiſtently to lay aſide the name, what party-names have been adopted by the proteſtant churches, whoſe religion is ſubſtantially the ſame common chriſtianity, and who agree in much more important articles than in thoſe they differ; and who therefore might peaceably unite under the common name of Chriſtians? We have Lutherans, Calviniſts, Arminians, Zuinglians, Churchmen, Preſbyterians, Independents, Baptiſts, and a long liſt of names which I cannot now enumerate. To be a chriſtian is not enough now-a-days, but a man muſt alſo be ſomething more and better; that is, he muſt be a ſtrenuous bigot to this or that particular church. But where is the reaſon or propriety of this? I may indeed believe the ſame things which Luther or Calvin believed; but I do not believe them on the authority of Luther or Calvin, but upon the ſole authority of Jeſus Chriſt, and therefore I ſhould not call myſelf by their name, as one of their diſciples,

diſciples, but by the name of Chriſt, whom alone I acknowledge as the Author of my religion, and my only maſter and Lord. If I learn my religion from one of theſe great men, it is indeed proper I ſhould aſſume their name. If I learn it from a parliament or convocation, and make their acts and canons the rule and ground of my faith, then it is enough for me to be of the eſtabliſhed religion, be that what it will: I may with propriety be called a mere conformiſt; that is my higheſt character; but I cannot be properly called a chriſtian; for a chriſtian learns his religion, not from acts of parliament or from the determinations of councils, but from Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel.

To guard againſt miſtakes on this head, I would obſerve that every man has a natural and legal right to judge and chooſe for himſelf in matters of religion; and that is a mean ſupple ſoul indeed, and utterly careleſs about all religion, that makes a compliment of this right to any man, or body of men upon earth, whether pope, king, parliament, convocation, or ſynod. In the exerciſe of this right, and ſearching for himſelf, he will find that he agrees more fully in leſſer as well as more important articles with ſome particular church than others; and thereupon it is his duty to join in ſtated communion with that church; and he may, if he pleaſes, aſſume the name which that church wears, by way of diſtinction from others: this is not what I condemn. But for me to glory in the denomination of any particular church, as my higheſt character; to lay more ſtreſs upon the name of a preſbyterian or a churchman than on the ſacred name of chriſtian; to make a punctilious agreement with my ſentiments in the little peculiarities of a party the teſt of all religion; to make it the object of my zeal to gain proſelytes to ſome other than the chriſtian name; to connive at the faults of thoſe of my own party, and to be blind to the good qualities of others, or invidiouſly to miſrepreſent or diminiſh them; theſe are the things which deſerve univerſal condemnation from God and man; theſe proceed from

from a ſpirit of bigotry and faction, directly oppoſite to the generous catholic ſpirit of chriſtianity, and ſubverſive of it. And yet how common is this ſpirit among all denominations! And what miſchief has it done in the world! Hence proceed contentions and animoſities, uncharitable ſuſpicions and cenſures, ſlander and detraction, partiality and unreaſonable prejudices, and a hideous group of evils, which I cannot now deſcribe. This ſpirit alſo hinders the progreſs of ſerious practical religion, by turning the attention of men from the great concerns of eternity, and the eſſentials of chriſtianity, to vain jangling and conteſt about circumſtances and trifles. Thus the chriſtian is ſwallowed up in the partiſan, and fundamentals loſt in extra-eſſentials.

My brethren, I would now warn you againſt this wretched miſchievous ſpirit of party. I would not have you entirely ſceptical and undetermined even about the ſmaller points of religion, the modes and forms, which are the matters of contention between different churches; nor would I have you quite indifferent what particular church to join with in ſtated communion. Endeavour to find out the truth, even in theſe circumſtantials, at leaſt ſo far as is neceſſary for the direction of your own conduct. But do not make theſe the whole or the principal part of your religion: do not be exceſſively zealous about them, nor break the peace of the church by magiſterially impoſing them upon others. 'Haſt thou faith in theſe little diſputables,' It is well; 'but have it to thyſelf before God,' and do not diſturb others with it. You may, if you pleaſe, call yourſelves preſbyterians and diſſenters, and you ſhall bear without ſhame or reſentment all the names of reproach and contempt which the world may brand you with. But as you ſhould not be mortified on the one ſide, ſo neither ſhould you glory on the other. A chriſtian! a chriſtian! let that be your higheſt diſtinction; let that be the name which you labour to deſerve. God forbid that my miniſtry ſhould be the occaſion of diverting your attention to any thing elſe. But I am ſo happy that I can appeal to yourſelves, whether

whether I have during ſeveral years of my miniſtry among you, laboured to inſtil into you the principles of bigotry, and make you warm proſelytes to a party: or whether it has not been the great object of my zeal to inculcate upon you the grand eſſentials of our holy religion, and make you ſincere practical chriſtians. Alas! my dear people, unleſs I ſucceed in this, I labour to very little purpoſe, though I ſhould preſbyterianize the whole colony.

Calumny and ſlander it is hoped, have by this time talked themſelves out of breath; and the lying ſpirit may be at a loſs for materials to form a popular plauſible falſehood, which is likely to be credited where the diſſenters are known. But you have heard formerly, and ſome of you may ſtill hear ſtrange and uncommon ſurmiſes, wild conjectures, and moſt diſmal inſinuations. But if you would know the truth at once, if you would be fully informed by one that beſt knows what religion I am of, I will tell you (with Mr. Baxter) 'I am a chriſtian, a mere chriſtian; of no other religion: my church is the chriſtian church.' The Bible! the Bible! is my religion; and if I am a diſſenter, I diſſent only from modes and forms of religion which I cannot find in my Bible; and which therefore I conclude have nothing to do with religion, much leſs ſhould they be made terms of chriſtian communion, ſince Chriſt, the only lawgiver of his church, has not made them ſuch. Let this congregation be that of a chriſtian ſociety, and I little care what other name it wears. Let it be a little Antioch, where the followers of Chriſt ſhall be diſtinguiſhed by their old catholic name, Chriſtians. To bear and deſerve this character, let this be our ambition, this our labour. Let popes pronounce, and councils decree what they pleaſe; let ſtateſmen and eccleſiaſtics preſcribe what to believe: as for us, let us ſtudy our Bibles: let us learn of Chriſt; and if we are not dignified with the ſmiles, or enriched with the emoluments of an eſtabliſhment, we ſhall have his approbation, who is the only Lord and Sovereign of the realm of conſcience,

ſcience, and by whoſe judgment we muſt ſtand or fall for ever.

But it is time for me to proceed to conſider the other view of the chriſtian name, on which I intend principally to inſiſt; and that is,

II. As a name of obligation upon all that wear it to be chriſtians indeed, or to form their temper and practice upon the ſacred model of chriſtianity. The proſecution of this ſubject will lead me to anſwer this important inquiry, What is it to be a Chriſtian?

To be a chriſtian, in the popular and faſhionable ſenſe, is no difficult or excellent thing. It is to be baptized, to profeſs the chriſtian religion, to believe, like our neighbours, that Chriſt is the Meſſiah, and to attend upon public worſhip once a week, in ſome church or other that bears only the chriſtian name. In this ſenſe a man may be a chriſtian, and yet be habitually careleſs about eternal things; a chriſtian, and yet fall ſhort of the morality of many of the heathens; a chriſtian, and yet a drunkard, a ſwearer, or a ſlave to ſome vice or other; a chriſtian, and yet a wilful impenitent offender againſt God and man. To be a chriſtian in this ſenſe is no high character; and, if this be the whole of chriſtianity, it is very little matter whether the world be chriſtianized or not. But is this to be a chriſtian in the original and proper ſenſe of the word? No; that is ſomething of a very different and ſuperior kind. To be a chriſtian indeed, is the higheſt character and dignity of which the human nature is capable: it is the moſt excellent thing that ever adorned our world: it is a thing that Heaven itſelf beholds with approbation and delight.

To be a chriſtian is to be like to Chriſt, from whom the name is taken: it is to be a follower and imitator of him; to be poſſeſſed of his ſpirit and temper; and to live as he lived in the world: it is to have thoſe juſt, exalted, and divine notions of God and divine things, and that juſt and full view of our duty to God and man, which Chriſt taught: in ſhort, it is to have our ſentiments,

ments, our temper, and practice formed upon the ſacred model of the goſpel. Let me expatiate a little upon this amiable character.

1. To be a chriſtian, is to depart from iniquity. To this the name obliges us; and without this we have no title to the name;—*Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity*, 2 Tim. ii. 19; that is, let him depart from iniquity, or not dare to touch that ſacred name. Chriſt was perfectly free from ſin; he was *holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparate from ſinners.* His followers alſo ſhall be perfectly free from ſin in a little time; ere long they will enter into the pure regions of perfect holineſs, and will drop all their ſins, with their mortal bodies, into the grave. But this, alas! is not their character in the preſent ſtate, but the remains of ſin ſtill cleave to them. Yet, even in the preſent ſtate, they are labouring after perfection in holineſs. Nothing can ſatisfy them until they are conformed to the image of God's dear Son. They are hourly conflicting with every temptation, and vigorouſly reſiſting every iniquity in its moſt alluring forms. And, though ſin is perpetually ſtruggling for the maſtery, and ſometimes in an inadvertent hour, gets an advantage over them, yet, as they are not under the law, but under grace, they are aſſiſted with recruits of grace, ſo that no ſin has any habitual dominion over them. Rom. vi. 14. Hence they are free from the groſs vices of the age, and are men of good morals. This is their habitual univerſal character; and to pretend to be chriſtians without this requiſite, is the greateſt abſurdity.

What then ſhall we think of the drunken, ſwearing, debauched, defrauding, rakiſh, profligate, profane chriſtians, that have over-run the chriſtian world? Can there be a greater contradiction? A loyal ſubject in arms againſt his ſovereign, an ignorant ſcholar, a ſober drunkard, a charitable miſer, an honeſt thief, is not a greater abſurdity, or a more direct contradiction. To depart from iniquity is eſſential to chriſtianity, and with-

out it, there can be no ſuch thing. There was nothing that Chriſt was ſo remote from as ſin; and therefore for thoſe that indulge themſelves in it to wear his name, is juſt as abſurd and ridiculous as for a coward to denominate himſelf from Alexander the Great, or an illiterate dunce to call himſelf a Newtonian philoſopher. Therefore, if you will not renounce iniquity, renounce the chriſtian name; for you cannot conſiſtently retain both. Alexander had a fellow in his army that was of his own name, but a mere coward. "Either be like me," ſays Alexander, "or lay aſide my name." Ye ſervants of ſin, it is in vain for you to wear the name of Chriſt, it renders you the more ridiculous, and aggravates your guilt: you may with as much propriety call yourſelves lords, or dukes, or kings, as chriſtians, while you are ſo unlike to Chriſt. His name is a ſarcaſm, a reproach to you, and you are a ſcandal to his name. His name is blaſphemed among the Gentiles through you.

2. To be a chriſtian is to deny yourſelves and take up the croſs, and follow Chriſt. Theſe are the terms of diſcipleſhip fixt by Chriſt himſelf. *He ſaid to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf and take up his croſs daily, and follow me.* Luke ix. 23. To deny ourſelves is to abſtain from the pleaſures of ſin, to moderate our ſenſual appetites, to deny our own intereſt for the ſake of Chriſt, and in ſhort to ſacrifice every thing inconſiſtent with our duty to him, when theſe come in competition. To take up our croſs, is to bear ſufferings, to encounter difficulties, and break through them all in imitation of Jeſus Chriſt, and for his ſake. To follow him, is to trace his ſteps, and imitate his example, whatever it coſt us. But this obſervation will coincide with the next head, and therefore I now diſmiſs it. Theſe, ſirs, and theſe only are the terms, if you would be chriſtians, or the diſciples of Chriſt. Theſe he honeſtly warned mankind of when he firſt called them to be his diſciples. He did not take an advantage of them, but let them know beforehand upon what terms they were admitted. He makes this

declaration

declaration in the midſt of a great crowd, in Luke xiv. 25, &c. *There went a great multitude with him*, fond of becoming his followers: *but he turned, and ſaid unto them, if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and ſiſters, yea, and his own life alſo, he cannot be my diſciple.* By hating is here meant a ſmaller degree of love, or a comparative hatred; that is, if we would be Chriſt's diſciples, we muſt be willing to part with our deareſt relations, and even our lives, when we cannot retain them conſiſtently with our duty to him. He goes on: *Whoſoever does not bear his croſs*, and encounter the greateſt ſufferings after my example, *cannot be my diſciple.* The love of Chriſt is the ruling paſſion of every true chriſtian, and for his ſake he is ready to give up all, and to ſuffer all that earth or hell can inflict. He muſt run all riſks, and cleave to his cauſe at all adventures. This is the eſſential character of every true chriſtian.

What then ſhall we think of thoſe crowds among us who retain the Chriſtian name, and yet will not deny themſelves of their ſenſual pleaſures, nor part with their temporal intereſt for the ſake of Chriſt? Who are ſo far from being willing to lay down their lives, that they cannot ſtand the force of a laugh or a ſneer in the cauſe of religion, but immediately ſtumble and fall away? or, are they Chriſtians, whom the commands of Chriſt cannot reſtrain from what their depraved hearts deſire? No; a Chriſtian, without ſelf-denial, mortification, and a ſupreme love to Jeſus Chriſt, is as great a contradiction as fire without heat, or a ſun without light, an hero without courage, or a friend without love. And does not this ſtrip ſome of you of the Chriſtian name, and prove that you have no title at all to it?

3. I have repeatedly obſerved, that a true Chriſtian muſt be a follower or imitator of Chriſt. *Be ye followers of me*, ſays St. Paul, *as I alſo am of Chriſt.* 1 Cor. xi. 1. Chriſt is the model after whom every Chriſtian is formed; for, ſays St. Peter, *he left us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps.* 1 Pet. ii. 21. St. Paul tells us,

us, that *we muſt be conformed to the image of God's dear Son*, Rom. viii. 29. and that *the ſame mind muſt be in us which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus*, Phil. ii. 5.; unleſs we partake of his ſpirit, and reſemble him in practice; unleſs we be as he was in the world, we have no right to partake of his name.

Here I would obſerve, that what was miraculous in our Lord's conduct, and peculiar to him as the Son of God and Mediator, is not a pattern for our imitation, but only what was done in obedience to that law of God which was common to him and us. His heart glowed with love to his Father, he delighted in univerſal obedience to him; it was his meat and his drink to do his will, even in the moſt painful and ſelf-denying inſtances; he abounded in devotion, in prayer, meditation, faſting, and every religious duty. He was alſo full of every grace and virtue towards mankind: meek and lowly, kind and benevolent, juſt and charitable, merciful and compaſſionate; a dutiful ſon, a loyal ſubject, a faithful friend, a good maſter, and an active, uſeful, public-ſpirited member of ſociety. He was patient and reſigned, and yet undaunted and brave under ſufferings: he had all his appetites and paſſions under proper government, he was heavenly-minded, above this world in heart while he dwelt in it. Beneficence to the ſouls and bodies of men was the buſineſs of his life; for *he went about doing good*. Acts x. 38. This is an imperfect ſketch of his amiable character; and in theſe things every one that deſerves to be called after his name, does in ſome meaſure reſemble and imitate him. This is not only his earneſt endeavour, but what he actually attains, though in a much inferior degree; and his imperfections are the grief of his heart. This reſemblance and imitation of Chriſt is eſſential to the very being of a Chriſtian, and without it, it is a vain pretence. And does your chriſtianity, my brethren, ſtand this teſt? may one know that you belong to Chriſt by your living like him, and diſcovering the ſame temper and ſpirit? Do the manners

of

of the divine Maſter ſpread through all his family; and do you ſhew that you belong to it by your temper and conduct? Alas! if you muſt be denominated from hence, would not ſome of you with more propriety be called Epicureans from Epicurus, the ſenſual Atheiſtic philoſopher, or Mammonites from Mammon, the imaginary god of riches, or Bacchanals from Bacchus, the god of wine, than Chriſtians from Chriſt, the moſt perfect pattern of living holineſs and virtue that ever was exhibited to the world?

If you claim the name of Chriſtians, where is that ardent devotion, that affectionate love to God, that zeal for his glory, that alacrity in his ſervice, that reſignation to his will, that generous benevolence to mankind, that zeal to promote their beſt intereſts, that meekneſs and forbearance under ill uſage, that unwearied activity in doing good to all, that ſelf-denial and heavenly mindedneſs which ſhone ſo conſpicuous in Chriſt, whoſe holy name you bear? Alas! while you are deſtitute of thoſe graces, and yet wear his name, you burleſque it, and turn it into a reproach both to him and yourſelves.

I might add, that the chriſtian name is not hereditary to you by your natural birth, but you muſt be born anew of the ſpirit to entitle you to this new name; that a Chriſtian is a Believer, believing in Him after whom he is called as his only Saviour and Lord, and that he is a true penitent. Repentance was incompatible with Chriſt's character, who was perfectly righteous, and had no ſin of which to repent; but it is a proper virtue in a ſinner, without which he cannot be a chriſtian. On theſe and ſeveral other particulars I might enlarge, but my time will not allow; I ſhall therefore conclude with a few reflections.

Firſt, You may hence ſee that the chriſtian character is the higheſt, the moſt excellent and ſublime in all the world: it includes every thing truly great and amiable. The chriſtian has exalted ſentiments of the ſupreme Being, juſt notions of duty, and a proper temper

temper and conduct towards God and man. A chriſtian is a devout worſhipper of the God of heaven, a cheerful obſerver of his whole law, and a broken-hearted penitent for his imperfections. A chriſtian is a complication of all the amiable and uſeful graces and virtues; temperate and ſober, juſt, liberal, compaſſionate and benevolent, humble, meek, gentle, peaceable, and in all things conſcientious. A chriſtian is a good parent, a good child, a good maſter, a good ſervant, a good huſband, a good wife, a faithful friend, an obliging neighbour, a dutiful ſubject, a good ruler, a zealous patriot, and an honeſt ſtateſman; and as far as he is ſuch, ſo far, and no farther, he is a chriſtian. And can there be a more amiable and excellent character exhibited to your view? It is an angelic, a divine character. Let it be your glory and your ambition to wear it with a good grace, to wear it ſo as to adorn it.

To acquire the title of kings and lords is not in your power; to ſpread your fame as ſcholars, philoſophers, or heroes, may be beyond your reach; but here is a character more excellent, more amiable, more honourable than all theſe, which it is your buſineſs to deſerve and maintain. And bleſſed be God, this is a dignity which the meaneſt among you, which beggars and ſlaves may attain. Let this therefore be an object of univerſal ambition and purſuit, and let every other name and title be deſpiſed in compariſon of it. This is the way to riſe to true honour in the eſtimate of God, angels, and good men. What though the anti-chriſtian chriſtians of our age and country ridicule you? let them conſider their own abſurd conduct and be aſhamed. They think it an honour to wear the chriſtian name, and yet perſiſt in unchriſtian practices; and who but a fool, with ſuch palpable contradiction, would think ſo? A beggar that fancies himſelf a king, and trails his rags with the gait of majeſty, as though they were royal robes, is not ſo ridiculous as one that will uſurp the chriſtian name without a chriſtian practice; and yet ſuch chriſtians are the favourites of the world. To renounce the profeſ-

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ſion of chriſtianity is barbarous and prophane; to live according to that profeſſion, and practiſe chriſtianity, is preciſeneſs and fanaticiſm. Can any thing be more prepoſterous? This is as if one ſhould ridicule learning, and yet glory in the character of a ſcholar; or laugh at bravery, and yet celebrate the praiſes of heroes. And are they fit to judge of the wiſdom and propriety, or their cenſures to be regarded, who fall into ſuch an abſurdity themſelves?

Secondly, Hence you may ſee that, if all the profeſſors of chriſtianity ſhould behave in character, the religion of Chriſt would ſoon appear divine to all mankind, and ſpread through all nations of the earth. Were chriſtianity exhibited to the life in all its native and inherent glories, it would be as needleſs to offer arguments to prove it divine, as to prove that the ſun is full of light: the conviction would flaſh upon all mankind by its own intrinſic evidence. Did chriſtians exemplify the religion they profeſs, all the world would immediately ſee that *that* religion which rendered them ſo different a people from all the reſt of mankind, is indeed divine, and every way worthy of univerſal acceptance. Then we ſhould have no ſuch monſters as Atheiſts, Deiſts, and Infidels in chriſtian countries. Then would Heatheniſm, Mahometiſm, and all the falſe religions in the world, fall before the heaven-born religion of Jeſus Chriſt. Then it would be ſufficient to convince an infidel juſt to bring him into a chriſtian country, and let him obſerve the different face of things there from all the world beſide. But alas!

Thirdly, How different is the chriſtian world from the chriſtian religion? Who would imagine that they who take their name from Chriſt have any relation to him, if we obſerve their ſpirit and practice? Should a ſtranger learn chriſtianity from what he ſees in popiſh countries, he would conclude it principally conſiſted in bodily auſterities, in worſhipping ſaints, images, relics, and a thouſand trifles, in theatrical fopperies and inſignificant

nificant ceremonies, in believing implicitly all the determinations of a fallible man as infallibly true, and in perſecuting all that differ from them, and ſhewing their love to their ſouls by burning their bodies. In proteſtant countries, alas! the face of things is but little better as to good morals and practical religion. Let us take our own country for a ſample. Suppoſe an Heathen or Mahometan ſhould take a tour through Virginia to learn the religion of the inhabitants from their general conduct, what would he conclude? would he not conclude that all the religion of the generality conſiſted in a few Sunday formalities, and that the reſt of the week they had nothing to do with God, or any religion, but were at liberty to live as they pleaſe? And were he told that theſe were the followers of one Chriſt, and were of his religion, would he not conclude that he was certainly an impoſtor, and the miniſter of ſin? But when he came to find that, notwithſtanding all this licentiouſneſs, they profeſſed the pure and holy religion of the Bible, how would he be aſtoniſhed, and pronounce them the moſt inconſiſtent bare-faced hypocrites! My brethren, great and heavy is the guilt that lies upon our country on this account. It is a ſcandal to the chriſtian name: it is guilty of confirming the neighbouring Heathen in their prejudices, and hinders the propagation of chriſtianity through the world. O let not us be acceſſary to this dreadful guilt, but do all we can to recommend our religion to univerſal acceptance! —I add,

Fourthly, and laſtly, Let us examine whether we have any juſt title to the chriſtian name; that is, whether we are chriſtians indeed; for if we have not the thing, to retain the name is the moſt inconſiſtent folly and hypocriſy, and will anſwer no end but to aggravate our condemnation. A loſt chriſtian is the moſt ſhocking character in hell; and, unleſs you be ſuch chriſtians as I have deſcribed, it will ere long be your character. Therefore, be followers of Chriſt, imbibe his

his ſpirit, practiſe his precepts, and depart from iniquity, otherwiſe he will ſentence you from him at laſt as workers of iniquity. *And then will I profeſs unto them* (they are Chriſt's own words) *I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* Matthew vii. 23.

SERMON XIII.

The Divine Mercy to mourning Penitents.

JEREMIAH xxxi. 18, 19, 20. *I have ſurely heard Ephraim bemoaning himſelf thus, Thou haſt chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed, as a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was inſtructed, I ſmote upon my thigh: I was aſhamed, yea, even confounded, becauſe I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear ſon? is he a pleaſant child? for ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will ſurely have mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord.*

IN theſe words the mourning language of a penitent child, ſenſible of ingratitude, and at once deſirous and aſhamed to return, and the tender language of a compaſſionate father, at once chaſtiſing, pitying and pardoning, are ſweetly blended: and the images are ſo lively and moving, that, if they were regarded only as poetical deſcriptions founded upon fiction, they would be irreſiſtibly ſtriking. But when we conſider them as the moſt important realities, as deſcriptive of that ingenuous repentance which we muſt all feel, and of that gracious acceptance we muſt all obtain from

God before we can be happy, what almighty energy ſhould they have upon us! how may our hearts diſſolve within us at the ſound of ſuch pathetic complaints, and ſuch gracious encouragements! Hard indeed is that heart that can hear theſe penitential ſtrains without being melted into the like tender relentings; and inveterate is that melancholy, incurable is that deſpondency, that can liſten to ſuch expreſſions of fatherly compaſſion and love, without being cheered and animated.

This whole chapter had a primary reference to the Jews, and ſuch of the Iſraelites as might mingle with them in their return from the Babylonian captivity. As they were enſlaved to foreigners, and removed from their native land for their ſin, ſo they could not be reſtored but upon their repentance. Upon this condition only a reſtoration was promiſed them. *Lev.* xxvi. 40—43. *Deut.* xxx. 1—16.

In this chapter we have a prediction of their repentance under the heavy chaſtiſement of ſeventy years captivity, and of their return thereupon to their own land. In the text the whole body of penitents among them is called by the name of a ſingle perſon, Ephraim. In the prophetic writings, the kingdom of the ten tribes, as diſtinguiſhed from that of Judah, is frequently denominated by this name, becauſe the Ephraimites were a principal family among them. And ſometimes, as here, the name is given to the Jews, probably, on account of the great number of Ephraimites mingled with them, eſpecially on their return from captivity. All the penitent Jews are included under this ſingle name, to intimate their unanimity in their repentance; their hearts conſented, like the heart of one man, to turn to the Lord, from whom with horrid unanimity they had revolted. This ſingle name Ephraim alſo renders this paſſage more eaſily applicable to particular penitents in all ages. Every one of ſuch may inſert his own name, inſtead of that of Ephraim, and claim the encouragement originally given to him. And indeed this whole paſſage is applicable

plicable to all true penitents. Repenting Ephraim did but ſpeak the language of every one of you, my brethren, who is made ſenſible of the plague of his own heart, and turned to the Lord; and the tender language of forgiving grace to mourning Ephraim is addreſſed to each of you; and it is with a view to you that I intend to conſider this ſcripture.

The text naturally reſolves itſelf into three parts, as it conſiſts of three verſes. In the firſt verſe we find the careleſs, reſolute impenitent, reduced by chaſtiſement to a ſenſe of his danger, and the neceſſity of turning to God; and yet ſenſible of his utter inability, and therefore crying for the attractive influences of divine grace. You hear Ephraim bemoaning his wretched caſe, and pouring out importunate groans for relief, thus: *Thou haſt chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed, like a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke*, that ſtruggles and wearies himſelf in vain to get free from it, and muſt be broken and tamed with ſevere uſage.—"Thus "ſtubborn and unmanageable have I been; and now "when I am convinced of the neceſſity of a return to "thee, I feel my obſtinate heart reluctate, like a wild "ox, and I cannot come. I therefore cry to thee for "the attractive influence of thy grace;" *Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned; draw me, and I ſhall run after thee.* "To whom but to thee ſhould I return? and "to whom but to thee ſhould I apply for ſtrength to "return? For thou only art the Lord my God, who "can help me, and whom I am under infinite obliga-"tions to ſerve."—Thus the awakened ſinner prayed; and mercy liſtened to his cries. The attractive influences of divine grace are granted, and he is enabled to return; which introduces the ſecond branch of the text in the 19th verſe, in which the new convert is repreſented as reflecting upon the efficacy of converting grace, and the glorious change wrought in him by it: *Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was inſtructed, I ſmote upon my thigh: I was aſhamed, yea, even confounded, becauſe I did bear the reproach of my youth.* While

While the returning prodigal is venting himſelf in theſe plantive ſtrains in ſome ſolitary corner, his heavenly Father's bowels are moving over him. The third part of the text repreſents the bleſſed God liſtening to the cries of his mourning child. *I have ſurely heard:* or, according to the emphaſis of the original, hearing I have heard *Ephraim bemoaning himſelf:* and while Ephraim is going on in his paſſionate complaints, God as it were interrupts him, and ſurpriſes him with the ſoothing voice of mercy. *Is Ephraim my dear ſon? is he a pleaſant child?** ſurely he is. Or we may underſtand the words thus, as if God ſhould ſay, "Whoſe "mourning voice is this I hear? Is this Ephraim my "dear ſon? Is this my pleaſant child, that bemoans "himſelf as a helpleſs orphan, or one abandoned by "his father? And can I bear to hear his complaints "without mingling divine conſolations with them, and "aſſuring him of pardon? No; for ſince I ſpake againſt "him in my threatenings, I do earneſtly remember him "ſtill:" *therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will ſurely have mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord.*

I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate each of theſe parts of the text, and thus ſhall be led to deſcribe the preparative exerciſes, the nature and concomitants of true repentance; and the tender compaſſions of heaven towards mourning penitents.

I. Let us view the returning ſinner under his firſt ſpiritual concern, which is generally preparatory to evangelical repentance.

And where ſhall we find him? And what is he doing? We ſhall not now find him, as uſual, in a thoughtleſs hurry about earthly things, confining all his attention to theſe trifles, and unmindful of the important concerns of eternity. We ſhall not find him merry, inconſiderate, and vain, in a circle of jovial, careleſs companions; much leſs ſhall we find him intrepid

* Though affirmative interrogations are generally to be underſtood as ſtrong negations, yet ſometimes they are to be underſtood affirmatively. See 1 *Sam.* ii. 27, 28. *Job* xx. 4.

trepid and ſecure in a courſe of ſin, gratifying his fleſh, and indulging his luſts. In this enchanted road the crowd of hardy impenitents paſs ſecure and cheerful down to the chambers of death, but the awakened ſinner flies from it with horror; or, if his depraved heart would tempt him to walk in it, he cannot take many ſteps before he is ſhocked with the horrid apparition of impending danger. He finds the flattering paths of ſin haunted with the terrible ſpectres of guilt, and the ſword of divine vengeance gleams bright and dreadful before him, and ſeems lifted to give the fatal blow. You will therefore find the awakened ſinner ſolitary and ſolemn, in ſome retired corner, not deceiving himſelf with vain hopes of ſafety in his preſent ſtate, but alarmed with apprehenſions of danger; not planning ſchemes for his ſecular advantage, nor aſking with ſordid anxiety, "Who will ſhew me any temporal good?" but ſolicitous about his periſhing ſoul, and anxiouſly enquiring, *what ſhall I do to be ſaved?* He is not congratulating himſelf upon the imaginary goodneſs of his heart or life, or priding himſelf with ſecret wonder in a rich conceit of his excellencies, but you will hear him in his ſorrowful retirement bemoaning, or (as the original ſignifies) condoling himſelf. He ſees his caſe to be really awful and ſad, and he, as it were, takes up a lamentation over himſelf. He is no more ſenſeleſs, hard-hearted, and ſelf-applauding, as he was wont to be; but like a mourning turtle, he bewails himſelf in ſuch tragical ſtrains as theſe: "Unhappy creature that I am! into what a deplorable ſtate have I brought myſelf! and how long have I continued in it with the inſenſibility of a rock, and the ſtupidity of a brute? Now I may mourn over my paſt neglected, and unimproved days, as ſo many deceaſed friends, ſent indeed from heaven to do me good, but cruelly killed by my ungrateful neglect and continued delays as to a return to God and holineſs. Fly back, ye abuſed months and years; ariſe from the dead; reſtore me your

your precious moments again, that I may unravel the web of life, and form it anew; and that I may improve the opportunities I have ſquandered away. Vain and deſperate wiſh! the wheels of time will not return, and what ſhall I do? Here I am a guilty obnoxious creature, uncertain of life, and unfit to die; alienated from God, and incapable (alas! I may add, unwilling) to return a ſlave to ſin, and too feeble to break the fetters of inveterate habits; liable to the arreſt of divine juſtice, and unable to deliver myſelf; expoſed to the vengeance of heaven, yet can make no atonement; deſtitute of an intereſt in Chriſt, and uncertain, awfully uncertain, whether I ſhall ever obtain it. Unhappy creature! How juſtly may I take up a lamentation over myſelf! Pity me, ye brute creation, that know not to ſin, and therefore cannot know the miſery of my caſe; and have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends! and if theſe guilty lips may dare to pronounce thy injured name, O thou God of grace have pity upon me! But alas! I deſerve no pity, for how long have I denied to myſelf! Ah! infatuated wretch! why did not I ſooner begin to ſecure my unhappy ſoul, that has lain all this time neglected and unpitied upon the brink of ruin! Why did I not ſooner lay my condition to heart? Alas, I ſhould have gone on thoughtleſs ſtill, had I not been awakened by the kind ſeverity, the gracious chaſtiſements of my diſhonoured Father.

Thou haſt chaſtiſed me. This, as ſpoken by Ephraim, had a particular reference to the Babyloniſh captivity; but we may naturally take occaſion from it to ſpeak of thoſe calamities in general, whether outward or inward, that are made the means of alarming the ſecure ſinner.

There are many ways which our heavenly Father takes to correct his undutiful children until they return to him. Sometimes he kindly takes away their health, the abuſed occaſion of their wantonneſs and ſecurity, and reſtrains them from their luſts with fetters of affliction.

tion. This is beautifully deſcribed by Elihu: *He is chaſtened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with ſtrong pain; ſo that his life abhorreth bread, and his ſoul dainty meat. His fleſh is conſumed away, that it cannot be ſeen, and his bones, that were not ſeen, ſtick out; yea, his ſoul draweth near unto the grave, and his life unto the deſtroyers. If there be a meſſenger with him, a peculiarly ſkilful interpreter, one among a thouſand, to ſhew unto man his uprightneſs, then he is gracious unto him, and ſaith, Deliver him from going down to the pit;* —I have found a ranſom. Job xxxiii. 19, &c. Sometimes God awakens the ſinner to bethink himſelf, by ſtripping him of his earthly ſupports and comforts, his eſtate, or his relatives, which drew away his heart from eternal things, and thus brings him to ſee the neceſſity of turning to God, the fountain of bliſs, upon the failure of the ſtreams. Thus he dealt with profligate Manaſſeh. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, 12. He was taken in *thorns, and bound in fetters, and carried to Babylon; and when he was in affliction he beſought the Lord, and humbled himſelf greatly before him, and prayed unto him*, &c. Thus alſo God promiſes to do with his choſen; *I will cauſe you to paſs under my rod, and bring you into the bond of my covenant.* Ezek. xx. 37. Pſal. lxxxix. 32. Prov. xxii. 15. xxix. 15.

But the principal means of correction which God uſes for the end of return to him is that of conſcience; and indeed without this all the reſt are in vain. Outward afflictions are of ſervice only as they tend to awaken the conſcience from its lethargy to a faithful diſcharge of its truſt. It is conſcience that makes the ſinner ſenſible of his miſery, and ſcourges him till he return to his duty. This is a chaſtiſement the moſt ſevere that human nature can endure. The laſhes of a guilty conſcience are intolerable; and ſome under them have choſen ſtrangling and death rather than life. The ſpirit of a man may bear him up under outward infirmities; but when the ſpirit itſelf is wounded, *who can bear it?* Prov. xviii. 14. Conſcience is a

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ſerpent in its breaſt, which bites and gnaws his heart; and he can no more avoid it than he can fly from himſelf. Its force is ſo great and univerſal, that even the heathen poet Juvenal, not famous for the delicacy of his morals, taught by experience, could ſpeak feelingly of its ſecret blows, and of agonizing ſweats under its tortures.*

Let not ſuch of you as have never been tortured with its remorſe, congratulate yourſelves upon your happineſs, for you are not innocents; and therefore conſcience will not always ſleep; it will not always lie torpid and inactive, like a ſnake benumed with cold, in your breaſt. It will awaken you either to your converſion or condemnation. Either the fire of God's wrath flaming from his law will enliven it in this world to ſting you with midicinal anguiſh; or the unquenchable fire of his vengeance in the lake of fire and brimſtone will thaw it into life, and then it will horribly rage in your breaſt, and diffuſe its tormenting poiſon through your whole frame: then it will become a never-dying worm, and prey upon your hearts for ever. But if you now ſuffer it to pain you with ſalutary remorſe, and awaken you to a tender ſenſibility of your danger, this inteſtine enemy will in the end become your boſom friend, will ſupport you under every calamity, and be your faithful companion and guardian through the moſt dangerous paths of life. Therefore now ſubmit to its wholeſome ſeverities, now yield to its chaſtiſements. Such of you as have ſubmitted to its authority, and obeyed its faithful admonitions, find it your beſt friend; and you now bleſs the day in which you complied with its demands; though

* ——— Frigida mens eſt
Criminibus, tacitâ ſudant præcordia culpâ.
JUVEN. Sat. I.
———Cur tamen hos tu
Evaſiſſe putes, quos diri conſcia facti
Mens habet attonitos, & ſurdo verbere cædit,
Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?
Id. Sat. XIII.

though before divine grace renewed your heart, your wills were ſtubborn and reluctant; and you might ſay with Ephraim,

I was chaſtiſed as a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke; that is, "As a wild young ox, unbroken from the herd, is unmanageable, refuſes the yoke, becomes outrageous at the whip or goad, and wearies himſelf in ineffectual ſtruggles to throw off the burden clapt upon him, and regain his ſavage liberty, and never will ſubmit until wearied out, and unable to reſiſt any longer; ſo has my ſtubborn heart, unaccuſtomed to obey, refuſed the yoke of thy law, O my God, and ſtruggled with ſullen obſtinacy under thy chaſtiſements. Inſtead of calmly ſubmitting to thy rod, and immediately reforming under correction, inſtead of turning to thee, and flying to thy arms to avoid the falling blow, I was unyielding and outrageous, like *a wild bull in a net*. Iſaiah li. 20. I wearied myſelf in deſperate ſtruggles to free myſelf from thy chaſtiſing hand; or vainly tried to harden myſelf to bear it with obdurate inſenſibility. I tried to break the rod of conſcience that I might no more groan under its laſhes, and my heart reluctated and rebelled againſt the gracious deſign of thy correction, which was to bring me back to thee my heavenly Father. But now I am wearied out, now I am ſenſible I muſt ſubmit, or periſh, and that my conſcience is too ſtrong for me, and muſt prevail."

You ſee, my brethren, the obſtinate reluctance of an awakened ſinner to return to God. Like a wild young bullock, he would range at large, and is impatient of the yoke of the law, and the reſtraints of conſcience. He loves his ſin and cannot bear to part with it. He has no reliſh for the exerciſes of devotion and aſcetic mortification; and therefore will not ſubmit to them. The way of holineſs is diſagreeable to his depraved heart, and he will not turn his feet to it. He loves to be ſtupidly eaſy and ſerene in mind, and cannot bear to be checked in his purſuit of buſineſs or plea-

ſure by anxieties of heart, and therefore he is impatient of the honeſt warnings of his conſcience, and uſes a variety of wretched expedients to ſilence its clamorous remonſtrances. In ſhort, he will do any thing, he will turn to any thing rather than turn to God. If his conſcience will be but ſatisfied, he will forſake many of his ſins; he will, like Herod, Mark vi. 20. do many things, and walk in the whole round of outward duties. All this he will do, if his conſcience will be but bribed by it. But if conſcience enlarges its demands, and, after he has reformed his life, requires him to make him a new heart, requires him to turn not only from the outward practice of groſs vices, but from the love of all ſin; not only to turn to the obſervance of religious duties, but to turn to the Lord with all his heart, and ſurrender himſelf entirely to him, and make it the main buſineſs of life to ſerve him; if conſcience, I ſay, carries its demands thus far, he cannot bear it, he ſtruggles to throw off the yoke. And ſome are curſed with horrid ſucceſs in the attempt: they are permitted to reſt content in a partial reformation, or external religion, as ſufficient, and ſo go down to the grave *with a lie in their right hand.* But the happy ſoul, on whom divine grace is determined to finiſh its work in ſpite of all oppoſition, is ſuffered to weary itſelf out in a vain reſiſtance of the chaſtiſements of conſcience, till it is obliged to yield, and ſubmit to the yoke. And then with Ephraim it will cry,

Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned. This is the mourning ſinner's language, when convinced that he muſt ſubmit and turn to God, and in the mean time finds himſelf utterly unable to turn. Many eſſays he makes to give himſelf to the Lord; but O! his heart ſtarts back, and ſhrinks away, as though he were ruſhing into flames, when he is but flying to the gracious embraces of his Father. He ſtrives, and ſtrives to drag it along, but all in vain. And what ſhall he do in this extremity, but cry, "*Lord, turn thou*

thou me, and I ſhall be turned; draw me, and I ſhall run after thee. Work in me to will and to do, and then I ſhall work out my own ſalvation! Lord, though I am ſenſible of the neceſſity of turning to thee, though I exert my feeble ſtrength in many a languid effort to come, yet I cannot; I cannot ſo much as creep towards thee, though I ſhould die on the ſpot. Not only thy word, but my own experience now convinces me that I cannot come unto thee, unleſs thou draw me. John vi. 44. Others vainly boaſt of their imaginary power, as though, when they ſet themſelves about it they could perform ſome great achievements. Thus I once flattered myſelf, but now, when I am moſt capable of judging, that is, when I come to the trial, all my boaſts are humbled. Here I lie, an helpleſs creature, unable to go to the phyſician, unable to accept of pardon and life on the eaſy terms of the goſpel, and unable to free myſelf from the bondage of ſin: and thus I muſt lie for ever, unleſs that God from whom I have revolted, draws me back to himſelf. Turn me, O thou that haſt the hearts of all men in thy hands, and canſt turn them whitherſoever thou pleaſeſt, turn me; and then, weak and reluctant as I am, I ſhall be turned; this backward heart will yield to the almighty attraction of thy grace.

"Here am I as paſſive clay in the hand of the potter; incapable to faſhion myſelf into a veſſel fit for thy houſe; but thou canſt form me as thou pleaſeſt. This hard and ſtubborn heart will be ductile and pliable to thine irreſiſtible power." Thus you ſee the awakened ſinner is driven to earneſt prayer in his exigence. Never did a drowning man call for help, or a condemned malefactor plead for pardon with more ſincerity and ardour. If the ſinner had neglected prayer all his life before, now he flies to it as the only expedient left, or if he formerly ran it over in a careleſs unthinking manner, as an inſignificant form, now he exerts all the importunity of his ſoul; now he prays as for his life, and cannot reſt till his deſires are anſwered.

The

The ſinner ventures to enforce his petition by pleading his relation to God; *Turn me,—for thou art the Lord my God.* There is a ſenſe in which a ſinner in his unregenerate ſtate cannot call God his God; that is, he cannot claim a ſpecial intereſt in him as his portion, nor cry "Abba, Father," with the ſpirit of adoption, as reconciled to God. But even an unregenerate ſinner may call him my God in other ſenſes; he is his God by right, that is, though he has idolatrouſly yielded himſelf to other gods, yet by right he ſhould have acknowledged him only. He is his God, as that name denotes authority and power, to which all ſhould be ſubject: his God, as he would now chooſe him to be his God, his portion and his all, which is implied in turning to him; he is his God by anticipation and hope, as upon his turning to him he will become his reconciled God in covenant; and he is his God by outward profeſſion and viſible relation. The force of this argument to urge his petition for converting grace, may be viewed in various lights.

It may be underſtood thus: "Turn thou me, for thou only, who art the Lord of the univerſe, and haſt all the creation at thy controul; thou only, who art my God and ruler, and in whoſe hand my heart is, art able to turn ſo obſtinate a creature. In vain do I ſeek for help elſewhere. Not all the means upon earth, not all the perſuaſions, exortations, invitations, and terrors that can be uſed with me, can turn this heart; it is a work becoming the Lord God Almighty, and it is thou alone canſt effect it."

Or we may underſtand the plea thus: "Turn thou me, and I ſhall turn to thee; to thee who art the Lord my God, and to whom I am under the moſt ſacred obligations to return. I would reſign thine own right to thee; I would ſubmit to thee who alone haſt a juſt claim to me as thy ſervant."

Or the words may be underſtood as an abjuration of all the idol-luſts to which the ſinner was enſlaved before. "I will turn to thee; for to whom ſhould I turn

turn but to the Lord my God? *What have I to do any more with idols?* Hoſea xiv. 8. Why ſhould I any longer ſubmit to other Lords, who have no right to me? I would renounce them all; I would throw off all ſubjection to them, and avouch thee alone for the Lord my God." Thus the Jews renounced their falſe gods upon their return from Babylon.

Or we may underſtand the words as an encouragement to hope for converting grace, ſince it is aſked from a God of infinite power and goodneſs. "Though I have moſt grievouſly offended, and had I done the thouſandth part ſo much againſt my fellow creatures, I could never expect a favourable admiſſion into their preſence; yet I dare aſk ſo great a favour of thee, for thou art God, and not man: thy power and thy grace are all divine, ſuch as become a God. I therefore dare to hope for that from thy hands, which I might deſpair of from all the univerſe of beings beſides."

Or finally, the paſſage may be looked upon as a plea drawn from the ſinner's external relation to God, as a member of his viſible church, and as dedicated to him. "Turn me, and I will turn to thee, whoſe name I bear, and to whom I have been early devoted. I would now of my own choice acknowledge the God of my fathers, and return to the guide of my youth. And, ſince thou haſt honoured me with a place in thy viſible church, I humbly hope thou wilt not reject me now, when I would ſincerely conſecrate myſelf to thee, and become thy ſervant in reality, as well as in appearance." In this ſenſe the plea might be uſed with peculiar propriety by the Jews, who had been nationally adopted as the peculiar people of God.

In whatever ſenſe we underſtand the words, they convey to us this important truth, that the awakened ſinner is obliged to take all his encouragement from God, and not from himſelf. All his truſt is in the divine mercy, and he is brought to an happy ſelf-deſpair.

Having

Having viewed Ephraim under the preparatory work of legal conviction, and the dawn of evangelical repentance, let us view him,

II. As reflecting upon the ſurpriſing efficacy of grace he had ſought, and which was beſtowed upon him in anſwer to his prayer.

We left him juſt now crying, *Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned*; here we find him actually turned. *Surely after that I was turned, I repented.* When the Lord exerts his power to ſubdue the ſtubbornneſs of the ſinner, and ſweetly to allure him to himſelf, then the ſinner repents; then his heart diſſolves in ingenuous diſintereſted relentings. His ſorrow and concern before converſion are forced and mercenary; they are occaſioned only by a ſelfiſh fear of puniſhment, and he would willingly get rid of them, but now his grief is free and ſpontaneous; it flows from his heart as freely as ſtreams from a fountain; and he takes pleaſure in tender relentings before the Lord for his ſin; he delights to be humble, and to feel his heart diſſolve within him. An heart of fleſh, ſoft and ſuſceptive of impreſſions, is his choice, and a ſtony inſenſible heart his greateſt burden; the more penitent the more happy, and the more ſenſeleſs, the more miſerable he finds himſelf. Now alſo his heart is actuated with a generous concern for the glory of God; and he ſees the horrid evil of ſin as contrary to the holineſs of God, and an ungrateful requital of his uninterrupted beneficence.

We learn from this paſſage, that the true penitent is ſenſible of a mighty turn in his temper and inclinations. *Surely after that I was turned, I repented.* His whole ſoul is turned from what he formerly delighted in, and turned to what he had no reliſh for before. Particularly his thoughts, his will, and affections are turned to God; there is an heavenly bias communicated to them which draws them to holineſs, like the law of gravitation in the material world. There is indeed a new turn given to his outward practice; the world may in ſome meaſure ſee that he is a new man; but this

this is not all; the firſt ſpring that turns all the wheels of the ſoul and actions of life is the heart, and this is firſt ſet right. The change within is as evident as that without, could our eyes penetrate the heart. In ſhort, *If any man be in Chriſt, he is throughout a new creature; old things are paſſed away, and behold, all things are become new.*

Apply this touchſtone to your hearts, my brethren, and ſee if they will ſtand the teſt.

The penitent proceeds, *After that I was inſtructed, I ſmote upon my thigh.* The ſame grace that turns him does alſo inſtruct him; nay, it is by diſcovering to him the beauty of holineſs, and the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, that it draws him. He is brought out of darkneſs into marvellous and aſtoniſhing light, that ſurpriſes him with new diſcoveries of things: he is inſtructed particularly, as to the neceſſity of turning to God, as to the horrid ingratitude, vileneſs, and deformity of ſin, and as to his folly and wickedneſs in continuing ſo long alienated from God. By the way, have you ever been let into theſe ſecrets, my hearers? And when inſtructed in theſe,

"He ſmites upon his thigh." This geſture denotes conſternation and amazement; and nature directs us thus to expreſs theſe paſſions. Ezekiel is enjoined to uſe this geſture as a prophetic action ſignifying the horror and aſtoniſhment of his mind. *Ezekiel* xxi. 12. This action, therefore, of the penitent, intimates what conſternation and amazement he is caſt into, when theſe new diſcoveries flaſh upon his ſoul. He ſtands amazed at himſelf. He is ſtruck with horror to think what an ungrateful, ignorant, ſtupid wretch he has been all his life till this happy moment. "Alas! what have I been doing? abuſing all my days in ruining my own ſoul, and diſhonouring the God of all my mercies! contentedly eſtranged from him, and not ſeeking to return! Where were my eyes, that I never before ſaw the horrid evil of my conduct, and the ſhocking deformity of ſin, which now opens to me in all its hideous

hideous colours! Amazing! that divine vengeance has not broken out upon me before now! Can it be that I am yet alive! in the land of hope too! yea, alive, an humble pardoned penitent! Let heaven and earth wonder at this, for ſurely the ſun never ſhone upon a wretch ſo undeſerving! ſo great a monument of mercy!"

The pardoned penitent proceeds,—*I was aſhamed, yea, even confounded, becauſe I did bear the reproach of my youth.* We are aſhamed when we are caught in a mean, baſe and ſcandalous action; we bluſh, and are confounded, and know not where to look, or what to ſay. Thus the penitent is heartily aſhamed of himſelf, when he reflects upon the ſordid diſpoſitions he has indulged, and the baſe and ſcandalous actions he has committed. He bluſhes at his own inſpection; he is confounded at his own tribunal. He appears to himſelf, a mean, baſe, contemptible wretch; and, though the world may honour him, he loaths himſelf, as viler than the earth he treads on; and is ſecretly aſhamed to ſee the face of man. And how then ſhall he appear before God? how ſhall he hold up his face in the preſence of his injured Father? He comes to him aſhamed, and covering his head. He knows not what to ſay to him; he knows not how to look him in the face, but he falls down abaſhed and confounded at his feet. Thus was penitent Ezra aſhamed before God. He fell upon his knees, and lifted up his hands (his eyes, like the publican, he durſt not lift up) unto the heavens, and he ſays, *O my God, I am aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſſes are grown up unto the heavens.—And now, O our God, what ſhall we ſay after this? for we have broken thy commandments.* Ezra ix. 5—10. Thus it was foretold concerning the repenting Jews. *Then thou ſhalt remember thy evil ways and be aſhamed. Thou ſhalt be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, becauſe of thy ſhame.* Ezek. xvi. 61, 63. There is good reaſon for

for this conſcious ſhame, and therefore it is enjoined as a duty: *Not for your ſakes do I this unto you, ſaith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be aſhamed and confounded for your own ways, O houſe of Iſrael.* Ezek. xxxvi. 32.

And what is the cauſe of this ſhame in the mourning penitent? "O (ſays he) it is *becauſe I bear the reproach of my youth.*" "I carry upon me (as the original word ſignifies) the brand of infamy. My youth, alas! was ſpent in a thoughtleſs neglect of God and the duties I owed him; my vigorous days were waſted in ſenſual extravagances, and gratifying my criminal inclinations. My prime of life, which ſhould have been ſacred to the Author of my exiſtence, was ſpent in rebellion againſt him. Alas! my firſt thoughts, my virgin-love, did not aſpire to him; nor did my young deſires, as ſoon as fledged, wing their flight to heaven. In ſhort, the temper of my heart, and my courſe of life, from the firſt exerciſes of reaſon to this happy hour of my converſion, were a diſgrace to my rational nature; I have degraded myſelf beneath the beaſts that periſh." *Behold, I am vile! I loath and abhor myſelf for all my filthineſs and abominations.* Ezek. xxxvi. 31. "And how amazing the grace of God, to honour ſo baſe a wretch with a place among the children of his love!"

Thus I have delineated the heart of penitent Ephraim; and let me aſk you my brethren, is this your picture? Have you ever felt ſuch ingenuous relentings, ſuch juſt conſternation, ſuch holy ſhame and confuſion? There can be no tranſition from nature to grace without previous concern, &c. You all bear the reproach of that youth, you have all ſpent ſome unhappy days in the ſcandalous ways of ſin, and your conſciences ſtill bear the brand of infamy. And have you ever been made deeply ſenſible of it? Has God ever heard you bemoaning yourſelves thus in ſome mournful ſolitude, "Thou haſt chaſtiſed me, and I was chaſtiſed, as a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke."

Is there any ſuch mourner here this day? then liſten to the gracious voice of your heavenly Father, while,

III. I am illuſtrating the laſt, the ſweeteſt part of the text, which expreſſes the tender compaſſion of God towards mourning penitents.

While they are bemoaning their caſe, and conſcious that they do not deſerve one look of love from God, he is repreſented as attentively liſtening to catch the firſt penitential groan that breaks from their hearts. Ephraim, in the depth of his deſpondency, probably did hardly hope that God took any notice of his ſecret ſorrows, which he ſuppreſſed as much as poſſible from the public view: but God heard him, God was watching to hear the firſt mournful cry; and he repeats all his complaints, to let him know (after the manner of men) what particular notice he had taken of them. "*I have ſurely heard*, or hearing I have heard;" that is, "I have attentively heard Ephraim bemoaning himſelf thus."

What ſtrong conſolation may this give to deſponding mourners, who think themſelves neglected by that God to whom they are pouring out their weeping ſupplications! He hears your ſecret groans, he courts your ſighs, and puts your tears into his bottle. His eyes penetrate all the ſecrets of your heart, and he obſerves all their feeble ſtruggles to turn to himſelf; and he beholds you not as an unconcerned ſpectator, but with all the tender emotions of fatherly compaſſion: for,

While he is liſtening to Ephraim's mounful complaints, he abruptly breaks in upon him, and ſweetly ſurpriſes him with the warmeſt declarations of pity and grace. "Is this Ephraim, my dear ſon, whoſe mourning voice I hear? Is this my pleaſant child, or (as it might be rendered) the child of my delights, who thus wounds my ear with his heart-rending groans?" What ſtrange language this to an ungrateful, unyielding rebel, that continued obſtinate till he was wearied out; that would not turn till drawn; that

deſerved

deſerved to fall a victim to juſtice! This is the language of compaſſion all divine, of grace that becomes a God.

This paſſage contains a moſt encouraging truth, that, however vile and abandoned a ſinner has been, yet, upon his repentance, he becomes God's dear ſon, his favourite child. He will, from that moment regard him, provide for him, protect him, and bring him to his heavenly inheritance, as his ſon and heir; for *Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come,* &c. Rom. viii. 38. &c. *ſhall ſeparate him from his Father's love; but he ſhall inherit all things.* Rev. xxi. 7. Yea, all things are his already in title, and he ſhall be made *greater than the kings of the earth*; he ſhall be made ſuch as becomes ſo dignified a relation as that of a Son to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

And is not this magnet ſufficient to attract all this aſſembly to their Father's houſe? Can you reſiſt the almighty energy of ſuch compaſſion? Return, ye periſhing prodigals! Return; though you have *ſinned againſt Heaven, and before your father, and are no more worthy to be called his ſons,* yet return, and you ſhall be made his dear ſons, his pleaſant children.

Are none of you in need of ſuch ſtrong conſolation as this? Do you want encouragement to return, and are you ready to ſpring up and run to your father's arms, upon the firſt aſſurance of acceptance? If this be what you want, you have an abundance for your ſupply. Are all your ſouls then in motion to return? Does that eye which darts through the whole creation at once, now behold your hearts moving towards God? Or am I waſting theſe gracious encouragements upon ſtupid creatures, void of ſenſation, that do not care for them, or that are ſo conceited of their own worth, as not to need them? If ſo, I retract theſe conſolations, with reſpect to you, and ſhall preſently tell you your doom. But let us farther purſue theſe melting ſtrains of paternal pity.

" For

"For ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill." Many and dreadful were the threatenings denounced againſt the ſinner, while impenitent; and, had he continued impenitent, they would certainly have been executed upon him.—But the primary and immediate deſign of the threatenings are to make men happy, and not to make them miſerable; they are deſigned to deter them from diſobedience, which is naturally productive of miſery, or to reclaim them from it, which is but to reſtrain them in their career to ruin. And conſequently theſe threatenings proceed from love as well as the promiſes of our God, from love to the perſon, though from hatred to ſin. So the ſame love which prompts a parent to promiſe a reward to his ſon for obedience, will prompt him alſo to threaten him, if he takes ſome dangerous weapon to play with: or, to chooſe a more pertinent illuſtration, for God is the moral ruler as well as father of the rational world; the ſame regard to the public weal, which induces a lawgiver to annex a reward to obedience, will alſo prompt him to add penalties to his law to deter from diſobedience; and his immediate deſign is not to make any of his ſubjects miſerable, but to keep them from making themſelves and others miſerable by diſobedience; though, when the threatening is once denounced, it is neceſſary it ſhould be executed, to vindicate the veracity of the lawgiver, and ſecure his government from inſult and contempt. Thus when the primary end of the divine threatenings, namely, the deterring and reclaiming men from diſobedience is not obtained, then it becomes neceſſary that they ſhould be executed upon the impenitent in all their dreadful extent; but when the ſinner is brought to repentance, and to ſubmit to the divine government, then all theſe threatenings are repealed, and they ſhall not hurt one hair of his head. And the ſinner himſelf will acknowledge that theſe threatenings proved neceſſary mercies to him, and that the denunciation of everlaſting puniſhment was one means

of

of bringing him to everlaſting happineſs, and that divine vengeance in this ſenſe conſpired with divine grace to ſave him.

Conſider this, ye deſponding penitents, and allay your terrors. That God, who has written ſuch bitter things againſt you in his word, earneſtly and affectionately remembers you ſtill, and it was with a kind intent to you that he thundered out theſe terrors at which you tremble. Theſe acids, this bitter phyſic, were neceſſary for your recovery. Theſe coals of fire were neceſſary to awaken you out of your lethargy. Therefore read the love of your Father, even in theſe ſolemn warnings. He affectionately remembers you ſtill; he cannot put you out of his thoughts.

Therefore my bowels (adds the all-gracious Jehovah) *are troubled for him.* Aſtoniſhing beyond conception! How can we bear up under ſuch words as theſe? Surely they muſt break our hearts, and overwhelm our ſpirits! Here is the great God, who has millions of ſuperior beings to ſerve him, and who is abſolutely independent upon them all, troubled, his very bowels troubled, for a rebellious, uſeleſs, trifling worm! Be aſtoniſhed at this, ye angels of light, who are the witneſſes of ſuch amazing, ſuch unbounded compaſſion! and wonder at it, O ye ſons of men, who are more intimately concerned in it, ſtand and adore, as it were, in ſtatues of admiration! It is true theſe words are not to be taken literally, as though the Deity were capable of ſorrow, or any of the human paſſions; but he here condeſcends to adapt himſelf to the language of mortals, and to borrow ſuch images as will convey to us the moſt lively ideas of his grace and tenderneſs to mourning penitents; and no image can anſwer this end better than that of a Father, whoſe bowels are yearning over his mourning child, proſtrate at his feet, and who, with eager embraces, raiſes him up, aſſuring him of pardon and acceptance. If any of you know what it is to receive a penitent child in this manner, while all the father is tenderly working within

within you, you may form ſome affecting ideas of the readineſs of our heavenly Father to receive returning ſinners from this tender illuſtration.

The Lord concludes this moving ſpeech with a promiſe that includes in it more than we can aſk or think, ſealed with his own ſacred name. *I will ſurely have mercy*, or (according to the more emphatical original) with Mercy, *I will have mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord:* that is, I will ſhew abundant mercy to him, I will give him all the bleſſings that infinite mercy can beſtow; and what can be needed more? This promiſe includes pardon, acceptance, ſanctification, joy in the Holy Ghoſt, peace of conſcience, and immortal life and glory in the future world. O ſirs! what a God, what a Father is this! *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity*, &c. Micah vii. 18.

And can you, ye mourners in Zion, can you fear a rejection from ſuch a tender Father? Can you dread to venture upon ſuch abundant mercies? Is there a mourning Ephraim in this aſſembly? I may call you, as God did Adam, *Ephraim, where art thou?* Let the word of God find you out, and force a little encouragement upon you: your heavenly Father, whoſe angry hand you fear, is liſtening to your groans, and will meaſure you out a mercy for every groan, a bleſſing for every ſigh, a drop, a draught of conſolation, for every tear. His bowels are moving over you, and he addreſſes you in ſuch language as this, "Is this my dear ſon? is this my pleaſant child?" &c.

And as to you, ye hardy impenitents, ye abandoned profligates, ye careleſs formaliſts, ye almoſt chriſtians, can you hear theſe things, and not begin now to relent? Do you not find your frozen hearts begin to thaw within you? Can you reſiſt ſuch alluring grace? Can you bear the thoughts of continuing enemies to ſo good, ſo forgiving a Father? Does not Ephraim's petition now riſe in your hearts, *Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned?* then I congratulate you upon this happy day; you are this day become God's dear ſons, the children of his delights, &c. Is

Is there a wretch ſo ſenſeleſs, ſo wicked, ſo abandoned, as to refuſe to return? Where art thou, hardy rebel? Stand forth, and meet the terrors of thy doom. To thee I muſt change my voice, and, inſtead of repreſenting the tender compaſſions of a father, muſt denounce the terrors of an angry judge. Thy doom is declared and fixt by the ſame lips that ſpeak to penitents in ſuch encouraging ſtrains; by thoſe gracious lips that never uttered an harſh cenſure. *God is angry with thee every day.* Pſalm vii. 11. *Except thou repenteſt, thou ſhalt ſurely periſh.* Luke xiii. 3. The example of Chriſt authoriſes me to repeat it again; *Except thou repenteſt, thou ſhalt ſurely periſh*, ver. 5. *The God that made thee will deſtroy thee; and he that formed thee will ſhew thee no favour.* Iſai. xxvi. 11. *Thou art treaſuring up wrath* in horrid affluence *againſt the day of wrath.* Rom. ii. 5. *God is jealous, and revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adverſaries; and he reſerveth wrath for his enemies. The mountains quake at him: the hills melt; the earth is burnt at his preſence; yea, the world, and they that dwell therein. Who can ſtand before his indignation? Who can endure in the fierceneſs of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.* Nahum i. 2—6. Theſe flaming thunder-bolts, ſinner, are aimed at thy heart, and, if thou canſt harden thyſelf againſt their terror, let me read thee thy doom before we part. You have it pronounced by God himſelf in Deuteronomy, the twenty-ninth chapter, at the nineteenth and following verſes, *If it come to paſs that when he heareth the words of this curſe, that he bleſs himſelf in his heart, ſaying, I ſhall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart— The Lord will not ſpare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealouſy ſhall ſmoke againſt that man, and all the curſes that are written in this book ſhall lie upon him, and the Lord ſhall blot out his name from under heaven; and the Lord ſhall ſeparate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Iſrael, according to all the curſes of the covenant*

venant that are written in this book of the law. And now ſinner, if thou canſt return home careleſs and ſenſeleſs with this heavy curſe upon thee, expect not a word of comfort, expect no bleſſing till thou art made truly penitent; for "how ſhall I bleſs whom God has not bleſſed?" The miniſterial bleſſing falls upon one on thy right hand, and one on thy left, but it lights not upon thee. The curſe is thy lot, and this muſt thou have at the hand of God, if thou continueſt hardened and inſolent in ſin. *Thou muſt lie down in ſorrow.* Iſai. l. 11. *Conſider this, all ye that forget God, leſt he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* Pſalm l. 22.

SERMON XIV.

Chriſt precious to all true Believers.

1 PETER ii. 7. *Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious.**

YES; bleſſed be God! though a great part of the creation is diſaffected to Jeſus Chriſt; though fallen ſpirits, both in fleſh and without fleſh, both upon earth and in hell, neglect him, or profeſs themſelves open enemies to him, yet he is precious; precious, not only in himſelf, not only to his Father, not only to the choirs of Heaven, who beheld his full glory without a veil, but precious to ſome even in our guilty world; precious to a ſort of perſons of our ſinful race, who make no great figure in mortal eyes, who have no idea of their own goodneſs, who are mean, unworthy creatures in their own view, and who are generally deſpicable in the view of others; I mean, he

* Or *preciouſneſs* in the abſtract, τιμή.

he is precious to all true believers. And, though they are but few comparatively in our world; though there are, I am afraid, but few additions made to them from among us; yet, bleſſed be God, there are ſome believers even upon our guilty globe; and, I doubt not, but I am now ſpeaking to ſome ſuch.

My believing brethren (if I may venture to claim kindred with you) I am now entering upon a deſign, which I know you have much at heart; and that is, to make the bleſſed Jeſus more precious to you, and, if poſſible, to recommend him to the affections of the crowd that neglect him. You know, alas! you love him but little; but very little, compared to his infinite excellency and your obligations to him; and you know that multitudes love him not at all. Whatever they profeſs, their practice ſhews that their carnal minds is enmity againſt him. This you often ſee, and the ſight affects your hearts. It deeply affects you to think ſo much excellency ſhould be neglected and deſpiſed, and ſo much love meet with ſuch baſe returns of ingratitude. And you cannot but pity your poor fellow-ſinners, that they are ſo blind to the brighteſt glory and their own higheſt intereſt, and that they ſhould periſh, through wilful neglect of their deliverer; periſh, as it were, within reach of the hand ſtretched out to ſave them. This is indeed a very affecting, very lamentable, and alas! a very common ſight. And will you not then bid me God ſpeed this day in my attempt to recommend this precious, though neglected, Jeſus? Will you not contribute your ſhare towards my ſucceſs in ſo pious and benevolent a deſign by your earneſt prayers? Now, ſhall not the interceding ſigh riſe to Heaven from every heart, and every ſoul be caſt into a praying poſture? I ſhall hope to diſcharge my duty with more comfort and advantage, if you afford me this aſſiſtance. And ſurely ſuch of you cannot deny me this aid, who deſire that Jeſus may become ſtill more precious to your own hearts,

and that he may be the object of univerſal love from all the ſons of men, who are now diſaffected to him!

To you that believe, he is precious—He?—Who? Is it Mammon, the God of the world? Is it pleaſure, or honour? No; none of theſe is the darling of the believing heart. But it is he who is the uppermoſt in every pious heart; he, who is firſt in the thoughts and affections; he, whom every friend of his muſt know, even without a name; if it be but ſaid of him, he is precious, this is enough to diſtinguiſh him from all others. "If it be he the apoſtle "means, may every believer ſay, who is moſt preci-"ous to my ſoul, then I can eaſily point him out, "though without a name. It muſt be Jeſus, for O! "it is he that is moſt precious to me." The connection alſo of the text directs us to the ſame perſon. It is he the apoſtle means, whom he had juſt deſcribed as a living ſtone, choſen of God, and the precious; the chief corner-ſtone, the great foundation of the church, that ſpiritual temple of God, ſo ſtately and glorious, and reaching from earth to heaven; it is this precious ſtone, this heavenly jewel, that is precious to believers.

"To you that *believe, he is precious*;" i. e. He is highly valued by you. You eſteem him one of infinite worth, and he has the higheſt place in your affections. He is dearer to your hearts than all other perſons and things. The word τιμὴ requires a ſtill ſtronger tranſlation: "To you that believe, he is *precioufneſs*;" precioufneſs in the abſtract; all precioufneſs, and nothing but precioufneſs; a precious ſtone without one blemiſh. Or it may be tranſlated with a little variation, "To you that believe, he is honour." It confers the higheſt honour upon you to be related to him; and you eſteem it your higheſt honour to ſuſtain that relation. Though Jeſus and his croſs are names of reproach in the unbelieving world, you glory in them, and they reflect a real glory upon you. Or, "To

"you

"you that believe, there is honour."* Honour is now conferred upon you in your being built as living ſtones in the temple of God upon this precious foundation; and honour is reſerved for you in heaven, where the crown of righteouſneſs awaits you.

"To you which believe, he is precious;" that is to ſay, the value of this precious ſtone is, alas! unknown to the crowd. It is ſo far from being precious, that it is a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence; a ſtone diſallowed of men (v. 4.) rejected even by the builders (v. 7.); but you believers, ye happy few, have another eſtimate of it. Faith enables you to ſee the glories of the bleſſed Jeſus; and, when you know him through this medium, you cannot but love him. The blind world neglect the Lord of Glory, becauſe they known him not: but you believers know him, and therefore to you he is precious. Faith preſents him to your view in a juſt light, and directs you to form a proper eſtimate of him. It is truly lamentable that ſuch real excellency ſhould be deſpiſed; but ſo it will be with the world till they believe. The mere ſpeculative recommendation of their reaſon, the prepoſſeſſions of education in his favour, and the beſt human means, are not ſufficient to render Jeſus precious to them. Nothing but ſaving faith can effect this.

To you therefore which believe, he is precious. The illative particle therefore ſhews this paſſage is an inference from what went before; and the reaſoning ſeems to be this: "This ſtone is precious to God, therefore it is precious to you that believe. You have the ſame eſtimate of Jeſus Chriſt which God the Father has; and for that very reaſon he is precious to you, becauſe he is precious to him." That this is the connection, will appear if you look back to the 4th and 6th verſes; where you find Jeſus deſcribed as "a chief corner-ſtone, laid in Zion, elect or choſen, and precious—diſallowed indeed of men, but choſen of God, and precious."

* The pronoun *he*, is not in the original; but the paſſage reads thus: *To you who believe, honour*,

precious."* Men wickedly diſapprove this ſtone, and even many of the profeſſed builders of his church reject him. This, ſays the apoſtle, muſt be granted. But this is no objection to his real worth. He is precious to God, who knows him beſt, and who is a perfect judge of real excellency; and for that very reaſon he is precious to you that believe. Faith teaches you to look upon perſons and things in the ſame light in which God views them; it makes your ſentiments conformed to his. Chriſt is the Father's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleaſed; and he is your beloved Saviour, in whom you are well pleaſed.

Is it any wonder that Jeſus ſhould be precious to believers, when he is ſo precious in himſelf, and in his offices, ſo precious to the angelic armies, and ſo precious to his Father?

1. He is precious in himſelf. He is Immanuel, God-man; and conſequently, whatever excellencies belong either to the divine or human nature, center in him. If wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, divine or human, created or uncreated, can render him worthy of the higheſt affection, he has a juſt claim to it.—Whatever excellencies, natural or moral, appear in any part of the vaſt univerſe, they are but faint ſhadows of his beauty and glory. *All things were created by him and for him; and through him all things conſiſt.* Col. i. 16, 17. and whatever excellencies are in the effect muſt be eminently in the cauſe. You do not wonder nor cenſure, when you ſee men delighted with the glories of the ſun, and the various luminaries of the ſky: you do not wonder nor blame when they take pleaſure in the beautiful proſpects of nature, or in that rich variety of good things, which earth, and ſea, and every element furniſhes for the ſupport of man, or the gratification of his ſenſes: you do not wonder and blame, when they are ſtruck with mortal beauty; when

* The word uſed in ver. 4 and 6, is a compound, rendered precious in the text. And this is an intimation that the text is an inference from the above verſes.

when you ſee them admire and approve wiſdom, benevolence, juſtice, veracity, meekneſs, and mercy: you never think it ſtrange, much leſs cenſurable, that men ſhould love theſe things, and count them precious; and can you be aſtoniſhed, can you ridicule or find fault that Jeſus is precious to poor believers? If the copy be ſo fair and lovely, who would not love the original, that has eyes to behold it? Believers ſee ſo much of the worth of Chriſt as is ſufficient to captivate their hearts, and convince them of their guilt in loving him no more; and the clearer their views are of him, the more are they mortified at the criminal defects of their love; for O! they ſee he deſerves infinitely more!

2. The Lord Jeſus is precious in his offices. His mediatorial office is generally ſubdivided into three parts; namely, that of a prophet, of a prieſt, and of a king: and how precious is Chriſt in each of theſe!

As a prophet, how ſweet are his inſtructions to a bewildered ſoul! How precious the words of his lips, which are the words of eternal life! How delightful to ſit and hear him teach the way of duty and happineſs, revealing the Father, and the wonders of the inviſible ſtate! How tranſporting to hear him declare upon what terms an offended God may be reconciled! a diſcovery beyond the ſearches of all the ſages and philoſophers of the heathen world! How reviving is it to liſten to his gracious promiſes and invitations! promiſes and invitations to the poor, the weary, and heavy laden, the broken-hearted, and even to the chief of ſinners! The word of Chriſt has been the treaſure, the ſupport, and joy of believers in all ages. *I have eſteemed the words of his mouth*, ſays Job, *more than my neceſſary food.* Job xxiii. 12. It is this precious word the Pſalmiſt ſo often and ſo highly celebrates. He celebrates it as *more to be deſired than gold*; *yea, than much fine gold: ſweeter alſo than honey, and the honey-comb.* Pſalm xix. 10. *O how I love thy law!* ſays he; *it is my meditation all the day.* Pſalm cxix. 97.

How

How ſweet are thy words unto my taſte! yea, ſweeter than honey to my mouth. ver. 103. *The law of thy mouth is better than thouſands of gold and ſilver.* ver. 72. *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts.* ver. 40. *Thy ſtatutes have been my ſong in the houſe of my pilgrimage.* ver. 54. *In my affliction, thy word hath quickened me.* ver. 50. *Unleſs thy law had been my delight, I ſhould then have periſhed in my affliction.* ver. 92. This is the language of David, in honour of this divine Prophet, near three thouſand years ago, when Chriſt had not revealed the full goſpel to the world, but only ſome rays of it ſhone through the veil of the Moſaic diſpenſation. And muſt not believers now, who live under the more complete and clear inſtructions of this great Prophet, entertain the ſame ſentiments of him? Yes, to ſuch of you as believe, even in this age, he is moſt precious.

But this external objective inſtruction is not all that Chriſt as a prophet communicates; and indeed, did he do no more than this, it would anſwer no valuable end. The mind of man, in his preſent fallen ſtate, like a diſordered eye, is incapable of perceiving divine things in a proper light, however clearly they are revealed; and therefore, till the perceiving faculty be rectified, all external revelation is in vain, and is only like opening a fair proſpect to a blind eye. Hence this great Prophet carries his inſtructions farther, not only by propoſing divine things in a clear objective light by his word, but inwardly enlightening the mind, and enabling it to perceive what is revealed by his Spirit. And how precious are theſe internal ſubjective inſtructions! How ſweet to feel a diſordered dark mind opening to admit the ſhinings of heavenly day; to perceive the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, the beauties of holineſs, and the majeſtic wonders of the eternal world! Speak, ye that know by happy experience, and tell how precious Jeſus appears to you, when by his own bleſſed Spirit he ſcatters the cloud that benighted your underſtandings, and lets in the rays

rays of his glory upon your admiring ſouls; when he opens your eyes to ſee the wonders contained in his law, and the glorious myſteries of his goſpel. What a divine glory does then ſpread upon every page of the ſacred volume! Then it indeed appears the Book of God, God-like, and worthy its Author. O precious Jeſus! let us all this day feel thine enlightening influences, that experience may teach us how ſweet they are! Come, great Prophet! come, and make thine own ſpirit our teacher, and then ſhall we be divinely wiſe!

Again, the Lord Jeſus is precious to believers as a great High Prieſt. As an high prieſt, he made a complete atonement for ſin by his propitiatory ſacrifice on the croſs; and he ſtill makes interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors on his throne in heaven. It was his ſacrifice that ſatisfied the demands of the law, and juſtice of God, and rendered him reconcileable to the guilty, upon terms conſiſtent with his honour and the rights of his government. It was by virtue of this ſacrifice that he procured pardon of ſin, the favour of God, freedom from hell, and eternal life for condemned obnoxious rebels. And ſuch of you who have ever felt the pangs of a guilty conſcience, and obtained relief from Jeſus Chriſt, you can tell how precious his atoning ſacrifice. How did it eaſe your ſelf-tormenting conſciences, and heal your broken hearts! How did it change the frowns of an angry God into ſmiles of love, and your trembling apprehenſions of vengeance into delightful hopes of mercy! How precious did Jeſus appear, with a pardon in his hand, with atoning blood guſhing from his opened veins, and making his croſs, as it were, the key to open the gates of heaven for your admiſſion! Bleſſed Saviour! our great High Prieſt, thus appear to us in all thy pontifical robes dyed in thine own blood, and cauſe us all to feel the efficacy of thy propitiation!

Let us next turn our eyes upwards, and view this great High Prieſt as our interceſſor in the preſence of God.

God. There he appears as a lamb that was ſlain, bearing the memorials of his ſacrifice, and putting the Father in remembrance of the bleſſings purchaſed for his people. There he urges it as his pleaſure, as his authoritative will, that theſe bleſſings ſhould in due time be conferred upon thoſe for whom they were purchaſed. In this authoritative manner he could intercede even in the days of his humiliation upon earth, becauſe of the Father's covenant-engagements with him, the accompliſhment of which he has a right to demand, as well as humbly to petition: *Father, I will, I will that thoſe whom thou haſt given me, may be with me*, &c. John xvii. 24. Now how precious muſt Chriſt appear in the character of Interceſſor! That the friendleſs ſinner ſhould have an all-prevailing advocate in the court of heaven to undertake his cauſe! that the great High Prieſt ſhould offer up the grateful incenſe of his own merit, with the prayers of the ſaints! that he ſhould add the ſanction of his authoritative will to the humble petitions of faith! that he ſhould urge the claims of his people, as his own claims, founded upon an unchangeable covenant with his Father, of which he has fully performed the conditions required! that he ſhould not intercede occaſionally, but always appear in the holy of holies as the conſtant ever-living Interceſſor, and maintain the ſame intereſt, the ſame importunity at all times, even when the petitions of his people languiſh upon their lips! What delightful reflections are theſe! and how warmly may they recommend the Lord Jeſus to the hearts of believers! How juſt is the apoſtle's inference, *Having an High Prieſt over the houſe of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full aſſurance of faith; and let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*. Heb. x. 21—23. *He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God by him*; for this reaſon, becauſe *he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them*. Heb. vii. 25. May each of us intruſt his cauſe to this all-prevailing Advocate, and we ſhall certainly gain it!

The

The unchangeable promiſe has paſſed his lips, *that whatſoever we aſk the Father in faith and in his name, he will give it us.* John xvi. 23.

Let me add, the kingly office of Chriſt is precious to believers. As King he gives laws; laws perfectly wiſe and good, and enforced with the moſt important ſanctions, everlaſting rewards and puniſhments. And how delightful, how advantageous, to live under ſuch a government! to have our duty diſcovered with ſo much clearneſs and certainty, which frees us from ſo many painful anxieties, and to have ſuch powerful motives to obedience, which have a tendency to infuſe vigour and ſpirit into our endeavours! As King, he appoints ordinances of worſhip. And how ſweet to converſe with him in theſe ordinances, and to be freed from perplexity about that manner of worſhip which God will accept, without being expoſed to that queſtion, ſo confounding to will-worſhippers, *Who hath required this at your hands?* As King, he is head over all things to his church, and manages the whole creation, as is moſt ſubſervient to her good. The various ranks of creatures in heaven, earth, and hell, are ſubject to his direction and controul; and they muſt all co-operate for the good of his people. He reclaims, confounds, ſubdues, or deſtroys their enemies, according to his pleaſure. And how precious muſt he be in this auguſt character to the feeble helpleſs believer! To have an almighty friend ſitting at the helm of the univerſe, with the ſupreme management of all things in his hands; to be aſſured that even the moſt injurious enemy can do the believer no real or laſting injury, but ſhall at length concur to work his greateſt good; and that, come what will, it ſhall go well with him, and he ſhall at laſt be made triumphant over all difficulty and oppoſition. O! what tranſporting conſiderations are here! But this is not the whole exerciſe of the royal power of Chriſt. He not only makes laws and ordinances, and reſtrains the enemies of his people, but he exerciſes his power inwardly upon their

hearts. He is the King of ſouls; he reigns in the hearts of his ſubjects; and how infinitely dear and precious is he in this view! To feel him ſubdue the rebellion within, ſweetly bending the ſtubborn heart into willing obedience, and reducing every thought into a cheerful captivity to himſelf, writing his law upon the heart, making the diſpoſitions of his ſubjects a tranſcript of his will, correſponding to it, like wax to the ſeal, how delightful is all this! O the pleaſures of humble ſubmiſſion! How pleaſant to lie as ſubjects at the feet of this mediatorial King without arrogating the ſovereignty ourſelves, for which we are utterly inſufficient! Bleſſed Jeſus! thus reign in our hearts! thus ſubdue the nations to the obedience of faith! *Gird thy ſword upon thy thigh, O moſt Mighty! and ride proſperouſly, attended with majeſty, truth, meekneſs, and righteouſneſs.* Pſalm xlv. 3, 4. *Send the rod of thy ſtrength out of Sion: rule thou in the midſt of thine enemies,* Pſalm cx. 2. rule us, and ſubdue the rebel in our hearts.

Thus you ſee the Lord Jeſus is precious to believers in all the views of his mediatorial office. But he is not precious to them alone; he is beloved as far as known, and the more known the more beloved: which leads me to add,

3. He is precious to all the angels of heaven.

St. Peter tells us that the things now reported to us by the goſpel are *things which the angels deſire to look into.* 1 Pet. i. 12. Jeſus is the wonder of angels now in heaven; and he was ſo even when he appeared in the form of a ſervant upon earth. St. Paul mentions it as one part of the great myſtery of godlineſs, that *God manifeſted in the fleſh was ſeen of angels.* 1 Tim. iii. 16. Angels ſaw him and admired and loved him in the various ſtages of his life, from his birth to his return to his native heaven. Hear the manner in which angels celebrated his entrance into our world. One of them ſpread his wings, and flew with joyful haſte to a company of poor ſhepherds that kept their midnight

night watches in the field, and abruptly tells the news, of which his heart was full: *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people; for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord: and ſuddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hoſt.* Crowds of angels left their ſtations in the celeſtial court in that memorable hour, and hovered over the place where their incarnate God lay in a manger: Jeſus, their darling, was gone down to earth, and they muſt follow him; for who would not be where Jeſus is? Men, ungrateful men, were ſilent upon that occaſion, but angels tuned their ſong of praiſe. The aſtoniſhed ſhepherds heard them ſing, *Glory to God in the higheſt; on earth peace; good-will to men.* Luke ii. 10—14. When he bringeth his firſt-born into the world, the Father ſaith, *Let all the angels of God worſhip him.* Heb. i. 6. This ſeems to intimate that all the angels crowded round the manger, where the infant God lay, and paid him their humble worſhip. We are told, that when the Devil had finiſhed his long proceſs of temptations, after forty days, and had left him, the *angels came and miniſtered unto him.* Matt. iv. 11. When this diſagreeable companion had left him, his old attendants were fond of renewing their ſervice to him. In every hour of difficulty they were ready to fly to his aid. He was ſeen of angels, in his hard conflict, in the garden of Gethſemane; and one of them *appeared unto him from heaven, ſtrengthening him.* Luke xxii. 43. With what wonder, ſympathy, and readineſs did this angelic aſſiſtant raiſe his proſtrate Lord from the cold ground, wipe off his bloody ſweat, and ſupport his ſinking ſpirit with divine encouragements! But, O! ye bleſſed angels, ye uſual ſpectators, and adorers of the divine glories of our Redeemer, with what aſtoniſhment and horror were you ſtruck, when you ſaw him expire on the croſs!

" Around

" Around the bloody tree
" Ye preſs'd with ſtrong deſire,
" That wondrous ſight to ſee,
" The Lord of life expire!
" And, could your eyes
" Have known a tear,
" Had dropt it there
" In ſad ſurprize."*

Ye alſo hovered round his tomb, while he lay in the priſon of the grave. The weeping women and his other friends found you ſtationed there in their early impatient viſits to the ſepulchre. O what wonders then appeared to your aſtoniſhed minds! Could you, that pry ſo deep into the ſecrets of heaven, you that know ſo well what divine love can do, could you have thought that even divine love could have gone ſo far? could have laid the Lord of Glory a pale, mangled, ſenſeleſs corps in the manſions of the dead? Was not this a ſtrange ſurprize even to you? And, when the appointed day began to draw, with what eager and joyful haſte did ye roll away the ſtone, and ſet open the priſon doors, that the riſing conqueror might march forth!

" And when array'd in light,
" The ſhining Conqueror rode,
" Ye hail'd his rapt'rous flight
" Up to the throne of God;
" And wav'd around
" Your golden wings,
" And ſtruck your ſtrings
" Of ſweeteſt ſound."†

When he aſcended on high, he was attended *with the chariots of God, which are twenty thouſand, even thouſands of angels.* Pſalm lxviii. 17, 18. And now, when he is returned to dwell among them, Jeſus is ſtill the darling of angels. His name ſounds from all their harps, and his love is the ſubject of their everlaſting

* Doddridge.

† An excellent hymn of Dr. Doddridge's on 1 Tim. iii. 16.—*Seen of Angels.*

laſting ſong. St. John once heard them, and I hope we ſhall ere long hear them, ſaying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and glory, and bleſſing.* Rev. v. 11, 12.—This is the ſong of angels, as well as of the redeemed from among men:

> " Jeſus, the Lord, their harps employs;
> " Jeſus, my love, they ſing:
> " Jeſus, the name of both our joys,
> " Sounds ſweet from ev'ry ſtring."*

O my brethren, could we ſee what is doing in heaven at this inſtant, how would it ſurprize, aſtoniſh, and confound us! Do you think the name of Jeſus is of as little importance there as in our world? Do you think there is one lukewarm or diſaffected heart there among ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands? O no! there his love is the ruling paſſion of every heart, and the favourite theme of every ſong. And is he ſo precious to angels? to angels, who are leſs intereſted in him, and leſs indebted to him? And muſt he not be precious to poor believers bought with his blood, and entitled to life by his death? Yes, you that believe have an angelic ſpirit in this reſpect; you love Jeſus, though unſeen, as well as they who ſee him as he is, though, alas! in a far leſs degree. But to bring his worth to the higheſt ſtandard of all, I add,

4. He is infinitely precious to his Father, who thoroughly knows him, and is an infallible Judge of real worth. He proclaimed more than once from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am pleaſed; hear ye him. Behold,* ſays he, *my ſervant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my ſoul delighteth.* Iſa. xlii. 1. He is called by the names of the tendereſt endearment; his Son, his own Son, his dear Son, the Son of his love. He is a ſtone, diſallowed indeed of men; if their approbation were the true ſtandard of merit,

* Watts's Hor. Lyric.

merit, he muſt be looked upon as a very worthleſs, inſignificant being, unworthy of their thoughts and affections. But let men form what eſtimate of him they pleaſe, he is *choſen of God, and precious.* And ſhall not the love of the omniſcient God have weight with believers to love him too? Yes, the apoſtle expreſsly draws the conſequence; he is precious to God, therefore to you that believe, he is precious. It is the characteriſtic of even the meaneſt believer, that he is God-like. He is a partaker of the divine nature, and therefore views things, in ſome meaſure, as God does; and is affected towards them as God is, though there be an infinite difference as to the degree. He prevailingly loves what God loves, and that becauſe God loves it.

And now, my hearers, what think you of Chriſt? Will you not think of him as believers do? If ſo, he will be precious to your hearts above all things for the future. Or if you diſregard this ſtandard of excellence, as being but the eſtimate of fallible creatures, will you not think of him as angels do; angels, thoſe bright intelligences, to whom he reveals his unveiled glories, who are more capable of perceiving and judging of him, and who therefore muſt know him better than you; angels, who have had a long acquaintance with him at home, if I may ſo ſpeak, for near ſix thouſand years, as God, *i. e.* ever ſince their creation, and for near two thouſand years as God-man? Since angels then, who know him ſo thoroughly, love him ſo highly, certainly you may ſafely venture to love him; you might ſafely venture to love him implicitly, upon their word. He died for you, which is more than ever he did for them, and will you not love him after all this love? It is not the mode to think much of him in our world, but it is the mode in heaven. Yes, bleſſed be God, if he be deſpiſed and rejected of men, he is not deſpiſed and rejected of angels. Angels, that know him beſt, love him above all, and, as far as their capacity will allow,

do

do juſtice to his merit: and this is a very comfortable thought to a heart broken with a ſenſe of the neglect and contempt he meets with among men. Bleſſed Jeſus! may not one congregation be got together, even upon our guilty earth, that ſhall in this reſpect be like the angels, all lovers of thee? O! why ſhould this be impoſſible, while they are all ſo much in need of thee, all ſo much obliged to thee, and thou art ſo lovely in thyſelf? Why, my brethren, ſhould not this congregation be made up of ſuch, and ſuch only as are lovers of Jeſus? Why ſhould he not be precious to every one of you, rich and poor, old and young, white and black? What reaſon can any one of you give why you in particular ſhould neglect him? I am ſure you can give none. And will you, without any reaſon, diſſent from all the angels in heaven, in point of which they muſt be the moſt competent judges? Will you differ from them, and agree in your ſentiments of Chriſt with the ghoſts of hell, his implacable, but conquered and miſerable enemies?

If all this has no weight with you, let me aſk you farther, Will you not agree to that eſtimate of Jeſus which his Father has of him? Will you run counter to the ſupreme reaſon? Will you ſet up yourſelves as wiſer than omniſcience? How muſt Jehovah reſent it to ſee a worm at his foot-ſtool daring to deſpiſe him, whom he loves ſo highly? O let him be precious to you, becauſe he is ſo to God, who knows him beſt.

But I am ſhocked at my own attempt.—O precious Jeſus! are matters come to that paſs in our world, that creatures bought with thy blood, creatures that owe all their hopes to thee, ſhould ſtand in need of perſuaſions to love thee? What horrors attend the thought! However, bleſſed be God, there are ſome, even among men, to whom he is precious. This world is not entirely peopled with the deſpiſers of Chriſt. To as many of you as believe, he is precious, though to none elſe.

Would

Would you know the reaſon of this? I will tell you; none but believers have eyes to ſee his glory, none but they are ſenſible of their need of him, and none but they have learned from experience how precious he is.

1. None but believers have eyes to ſee the glory of Chriſt. As the knowledge of Chriſt is entirely from revelation, an avowed unbeliever, who rejects that revelation, can have no right knowledge of him, and therefore muſt be entirely indifferent towards him, as one unknown, or muſt deſpiſe and abhor him as an enthuſiaſt or impoſtor. But one, who is not an unbeliever in profeſſion or ſpeculation, may yet be deſtitute of that faith which conſtitutes a true believer, and which renders Jeſus precious to the ſoul. Even devils are very orthodox in ſpeculation: Devils believe, and tremble; and they could cry out, *What have we to do with thee, Jeſus of Nazareth? We know thee, who thou art; even the Holy One of God.* Mark i. 24. And there are crowds among us who believe, after a faſhion, that Chriſt is the true Meſſiah, who yet ſhew by their practices that they neglect him in their hearts, and are not believes in the full import of the character. True faith includes not only a ſpeculative knowledge and belief, but a clear, affecting, realizing view, and an hearty approbation of the things known and believed concerning Jeſus Chriſt; and ſuch a view, ſuch an approbation, cannot be produced by any human means, but only by the enlightening influence of the holy Spirit ſhining into the heart.—Without ſuch a faith as this, the mind is all dark and blind as to the glory of Jeſus Chriſt; it can ſee no beauty in him, that he ſhould be deſired. Honourable and ſublime ſpeculations concerning him may hover in the underſtanding, and the tongue may pronounce many pompous panegyrics in his praiſe, but the underſtanding has no realizing, affecting views of his excellency; nor does the heart delight in him and love him as infinitely precious and lovely. The God of this

this world, the prince of darkneſs, has blinded the minds of them that believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt ſhould ſhine into them. But as to the enlightened believer, God, who firſt commanded light to ſhine out of darkneſs, has ſhined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. This divine illumination pierces the cloud that obſcured his underſtanding, and enables him to view the Lord Jeſus in a ſtrong and ſtriking light; a light entirely different from that of the crowd around him; a light, in which it is impoſſible to view this glorious object without loving him. A believer and an unbeliever may be equally orthodox in ſpeculation, and have the ſame notions in theory concerning Jeſus Chriſt, and yet it is certainly true, that their views of him are vaſtly different. Believers! do you think that, if the Chriſt-deſpiſing multitude around you had the ſame views of his worth and preciouſneſs which you have, they could neglect him as they do? It is impoſſible. You could once neglect him, as others do now; you were no more charmed with his beauty than they. But O! when you were brought out of darkneſs into God's marvellous light, when the glories of the neglected Saviour broke in upon your aſtoniſhed minds, then was it poſſible for you to withhold your love from him? Were not your hearts captivated with delightful violence? You could no more reſiſt. Did not your hearts then as naturally and freely love him, whom they had once diſguſted, as ever they loved a dear child or a friend, or the ſweeteſt created enjoyment? The improving your reaſon into faith is ſetting the diſordered eye of the mind right, that it may be able to ſee this object; and when once you viewed it with this eye of reaſon reſtored and improved, how did the precious ſtone ſparkle before you, and charm you with its brilliancy and excellence? Chriſt is one of thoſe things unſeen and hoped for, of which St. Paul ſays, *Faith is the ſubſtance and evidence.* Heb. xi. 1.

Faith gives Chriſt a preſent ſubſiſtence in the mind, not as a majeſtic phantom, but as the moſt glorious and important reality; and this faith is a clear affecting demonſtration, or conviction, of his exiſtence, and of his being in reality what his word repreſents him. It is by ſuch a faith, that is, under its habitual influence, that the believer lives; and hence, while he lives, Jeſus is ſtill precious to him.

2. None but believers are properly ſenſible of their need of Chriſt. They are deeply ſenſible of their ignorance and the diſorder of their underſtanding, and therefore they are ſenſible of their want of both the external and internal inſtructions of this divine Prophet. But as to others, they are puffed up with intellectual pride, and apprehend themſelves in very little need of religious inſtructions; and therefore they think but very ſlightly of him. Believers feel themſelves guilty, deſtitute of all righteouſneſs, and incapable of making atonement for their ſins, or recommending themſelves to God, and therefore the ſatisfaction and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt are moſt precious to them, and they rejoice in him as their all-prevailing Interceſſor. But as to the unbelieving crowd, they have no ſuch mortifying thoughts of themſelves: they have ſo many excuſes to make for their ſins, that they bring down their guilt to a very trifling thing, hardly worthy of divine reſentment; and they magnify their good works to ſuch an height, that they imagine they will nearly balance their bad, and procure them ſome favour at leaſt from God, and therefore they muſt look upon this High Prieſt as needleſs. They alſo love to be free from the reſtraints of religion, and to have the command of themſelves. They would uſurp the power of ſelf-government, and make their own pleaſure their rule; and therefore the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as a King, is ſo far from being precious, that he is very unacceptable to ſuch obſtinate, headſtrong rebels. They chooſe to have no lawgiver, but their own wills; and therefore they trample upon his laws,

laws, and, as it were, form inſurrections againſt his government. But the poor believer, ſenſible of his incapacity for ſelf-government, loves to be under direction, and delights to feel the dependent, ſubmiſſive, pliant ſpirit of a ſubject. He counts it a mercy not to have the management of himſelf, and feels his need of this mediatorial King to rule him. He hates the rebel within, hates every inſurrection of ſin, and longs to have it entirely ſubdued, and every thought, every motion of his ſoul, brought into captivity to the obedience of Chriſt; and therefore he feels the need of his royal power to make an entire conqueſt of his hoſtile ſpirit. His commands are not uneaſy impoſitions, but moſt acceptable and friendly directions to him; and the prohibitions of his law are not painful reſtraints, but a kind of privileges in his eſteem. The language of his heart is, "Precious Jeſus! be thou my King. I love to live in humble ſubjection to thee. I would voluntarily ſubmit myſelf to thy controul and direction. Thy will, not mine, be done! O ſubdue every rebellious principle within, and make me all reſignation and cheerful obedience to thee!" To ſuch a ſoul it is no wonder Jeſus ſhould be exceeding precious: but O how different is this ſpirit from that which generally prevails in the world! Let me add but one reaſon more why Jeſus is precious to believers, and them only; namely,

3. None but believers have known by experience how precious he is. They, and only they, can reflect upon the glorious views of him, which themſelves have had, to captivate their hearts forever to him. They, and only they, have known what it is to feel a bleeding heart healed by his gentle hand; and a clamorous anguiſhing conſcience pacified by his atoning blood. They, and only they, know by experience how ſweet it is to feel his love ſhed abroad in their hearts, to feel an heart, raviſhed with his glory, pant, and long, and breathe after him, and exerting the various acts of faith, deſire, joy, and hope

towards

towards him. They, and only they, know by experience how pleaſant it is to converſe with him in his ordinances, and to ſpend an hour of devotion in ſome retirement, as it were, in his company. They, and only they, have experienced the exertions of his royal power, conquering their mightieſt ſins, and ſweetly ſubduing them to himſelf. Theſe are, in ſome meaſure, matters of experience with every true believer, and therefore it is no wonder Jeſus ſhould be precious to them. But as to the unbelieving multitude, poor creatures! they are entire ſtrangers to theſe things. They may have ſome ſuperficial notions of them floating in their heads, but they have never felt them in their hearts, and therefore the infinitely precious Lord Jeſus is a worthleſs, inſignificant Being to them: and thus, alas! it will be with the unhappy creatures, until experience becomes their teacher; until they taſte for themſelves *that the Lord is gracious.* 1 Peter ii. 3.

There is an intereſting queſtion, which, I doubt not, has riſen in the minds of ſuch of you as have heard what has been ſaid with a particular application to yourſelves, and keeps you in a painful ſuſpence: with an anſwer to which I ſhall conclude: "Am I indeed a true believer? may ſome of you ſay; and is Chriſt precious to me? My ſatisfaction in this ſweet ſubject is vaſtly abated, till this queſtion is ſolved. Sometimes, I humbly think, the evidence is in my favour, and I begin to hope that he is indeed precious to my ſoul; but alas! my love for him ſoon languiſhes, and then my doubts and fears return, and I know not what to do, nor what to think of myſelf." Do not ſome of you, my brethren, long to have this perplexing caſe cleared up? O what would you not give, if you might return home this evening fully ſatisfied in this point? Well, I would willingly help you, for experience has taught me to ſympathize with you under this difficulty. O my heart! how often haſt thou been ſuſpicious of thyſelf in this reſpect? The readieſt way I can now take to clear up the matter is to

anſwer

anſwer another queſtion, naturally reſulting from my ſubject; and that is, "How does that high eſteem which a believer has for Jeſus Chriſt diſcover itſelf? Or how does he ſhew that Chriſt is indeed precious to him?" I anſwer, he ſhews it in various ways, particularly by his affectionate thoughts of him, which often riſe in his mind, and always find welcome there. He diſcovers that Jeſus is precious to him by hating and reſiſting whatever is diſpleaſing to him, and by parting with every thing that comes in competition with him. He will let all go rather than part with Chriſt. Honour, reputation, eaſe, riches, pleaſure, and even life itſelf, are nothing to him in compariſon of Chriſt, and he will run the riſque of all; nay, will actually loſe all, if he may but win Chriſt. He diſcovers this high eſteem for him by the pleaſure he takes in feeling his heart ſuitably affected towards him, and by his uneaſineſs when it is otherwiſe. O! when he can love Jeſus, when his thoughts affectionately claſp around him, and when he has an heart to ſerve him, then he is happy, his ſoul is well, and he is lively and cheerful. But alas! when it is otherwiſe with him, when his love languiſhes, when his heart hardens, when it becomes out of order for his ſervice, then he grows uneaſy and diſcontented, and cannot be at reſt. When Jeſus favours him with his gracious preſence, and revives him with his influence, how does he rejoice! But when his beloved withdraws himſelf and is gone, how does he lament his abſence, and long for his return! He weeps and cries like a bereaved, deſerted orphan, and moans like a loving turtle in the abſence of its mate. Becauſe Chriſt is ſo precious to him, he cannot bear the thought of parting with him, and the leaſt jealouſy of his love pierces his very heart. Becauſe he loves him he longs for the full enjoyment of him, and is raviſhed with the proſpect of it. Becauſe Chriſt is precious to him, his intereſts are ſo too, and he longs to ſee his kingdom flouriſh, and all men flouriſh, and all men fired with his love. Becauſe he

loves

loves him, he loves his ordinances; loves to hear, becauſe it is the word of Jeſus; loves to pray, becauſe it is maintaining intercourſe with Jeſus; loves to ſit at his table, becauſe it is a memorial of Jeſus; and loves his people, becauſe they love Jeſus. Whatever has a relation to his precious Saviour is for that reaſon precious to him; and when he feels any thing of a contrary diſpoſition, alas! it grieves him, and makes him abhor himſelf. Theſe things are ſufficient to ſhew that the Lord Jeſus has his heart, and is indeed precious to him; and is not this the very picture of ſome trembling doubting ſouls among you? If it be, take courage. After ſo many vain ſearches, you have at length diſcovered the welcome ſecret, that Chriſt is indeed precious to you: and if ſo, you may be ſure that you are precious to him. *You ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels.* Mal. iii. 17. If you are now ſatisfied, after thorough trial of the caſe, retain your hope, and let not every diſcouraging appearance renew your jealouſies again: labour to be ſteady and firm Chriſtians, and do not ſtagger through unbelief.

But alas! I fear that many of you know nothing experimentally of the exerciſes of a believing heart, which I have been deſcribing, and conſequently that Chriſt is not precious to you. If this is the caſe, you may be ſure indeed you are hateful to him. He is angry with the wicked every day. "Thoſe that honour him he will honour; but they that deſpiſe him ſhall be lightly eſteemed." 1 *Sam.* ii. 30. And what will you do if Chriſt ſhould become your enemy and fight againſt you? If this precious ſtone ſhould become a ſtone of ſtumbling and a rock of offence to you, over which you will fall into ruin, O how dreadful muſt the fall be! What muſt you expect but to lie down in unutterable and everlaſting ſorrow!

SERMON

SERMON XV.

The Danger of Lukewarmneſs in Religion.

REVELATION iii. 15, 16. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my mouth.*

THE ſoul of man is endowed with ſuch active powers, that it cannot be idle; and, if we look round the world, we ſee it all alive and buſy in ſome purſuit or other. What vigorous action, what labour and toil, what hurry, noiſe, and commotion about the neceſſaries of life, about riches and honours! Here men are in earneſt: here there is no diſſimulation, no indifferency about the event. They ſincerely deſire, and eagerly ſtrive for theſe tranſient delights, or vain embelliſhments of a moral life.

And may we infer farther, that creatures, thus formed for action, and thus laborious and unwearied in theſe inferior purſuits, are proportionably vigorous and in earneſt in matters of infinitely greater importance? May we conclude, that they proportion their labour and activity to the nature of things, and that they are moſt in earneſt where they are moſt concerned? A ſtranger to our world, that could conclude nothing concerning the conduct of mankind but from the generous preſumptions of his own charitable heart, might perſuade himſelf that this is the caſe. But one that has been but a little while converſant with them, and taken the leaſt notice of their temper and practice with regard to that moſt intereſting thing, Religion, muſt know it is quite otherwiſe. For look round you, and what do you ſee? Here and there indeed

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you may ſee a few unfaſhionable creatures, who act as if they looked upon religion to be the moſt intereſting concern; and who ſeem determined, let others do as they will, to make ſure of ſalvation, whatever becomes of them in other reſpects: but as to the generality, they are very indifferent about it. They will not indeed renounce all religion entirely; they will make ſome little profeſſion of the religion that happens to be moſt modiſh and reputable in their country, and they will conform to ſome of its inſtitutions; but it is a matter of indifferency with them, and they are but little concerned about it; or, in the language of my text, they are *lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot.*

This threatening, *I will ſpue thee out of my mouth,* has been long ago executed with a dreadful ſeverity upon the Laodicean church; and it is now ſucceeded by a mongrel race of Pagans and Mahometans; and the name of Chriſt is not heard among them. But, though this church has been demoliſhed for ſo many hundreds of years, that lukewarmneſs of ſpirit in religion which brought this judgment upon them, ſtill lives, and poſſeſſes the chriſtians of our age: it may therefore be expedient for us to conſider Chriſt's friendly warning to them, that we may eſcape their doom.

The epiſtles to the ſeven churches in Aſia are introduced with this ſolemn and ſtriking preface, "I know thy works:" that is to ſay, your character is drawn by one that thoroughly knows you; one who inſpects all your conduct, and takes notice of you when you take no notice of yourſelves; one that cannot be impoſed upon by an empty profeſſion and artifice, but ſearches the heart and the reins. O that this truth were deeply impreſſed upon our hearts; for ſurely we could not trifle and offend while ſenſible that we are under the eye of our Judge!

I know thy works, ſays he to the Laodicean church, *that thou art neither cold nor hot.* This church was in a very bad condition, and Chriſt reproves her with the greateſt

greateſt ſeverity;* and yet we do not find her charged with the practice or toleration of any groſs immoralities, as ſome of the other churches were. She is not cenſured for indulging fornication among her members, or communicating with idolaters in eating things ſacrificed to idols, like ſome of the reſt. She was free from the infection of the Nicolaitans, which had ſpread among them. What then is her charge? It is a ſubtle, latent wickedneſs, that has no ſhocking appearance, that makes no groſs blemiſh in the outward character of a profeſſor in the view of others, and may eſcape his own notice; it is, *Thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot:* as if our Lord had ſaid, Thou doſt not entirely renounce and openly diſregard the chriſtian religion, and thou doſt not make it a ſerious buſineſs, and mind it as thy grand concern. Thou haſt a form of godlineſs, but denieſt the power. All thy religion is a dull, languid thing, a mere indifferency; thine heart is not in it; it is not animated with the fervour of thy ſpirit. Thou haſt neither the coldneſs of the profligate ſinner, nor the ſacred fire and life of the true chriſtian; but thou keepeſt in a ſort of medium between them. In ſome things thou reſembleſt the one, in other things the other; as lukewarmneſs partakes of the nature both of heat and cold.

Now ſuch a lukewarmneſs is an eternal ſoleciſm in religion: it is the moſt abſurd and inconſiſtent thing imaginable; more ſo than avowed impiety, or a profeſſed rejection of all religion: therefore, ſays Chriſt, *I would thou wert cold or hot,—i. e.* "You might be any thing more conſiſtently than what you are. If you looked upon religion as a cheat, and openly rejected the profeſſion of it, it would not be ſtrange that you ſhould be careleſs about it, and diſregard it in

* She was as loathſome to him as lukewarm water to the ſtomach, and he characteriſes her as "wretched, and miſerable, and poor, "and blind, and naked." What condition can be more deplorable and dangerous?

practice. But to own it true, and make a profeſſion of it, and yet be lukewarm and indifferent about it, this is the moſt abſurd conduct that can be conceived; for, if it be true, it is certainly the moſt important and intereſting truth in all the world, and requires the utmoſt exertion of all your powers."

When Chriſt expreſſes his abhorrence of lukewarmneſs in the form of a wiſh, *I would thou wert cold or hot*, we are not to ſuppoſe his meaning to be, that coldneſs or fervour in religion are equally acceptable, or that coldneſs is at all acceptable to him; for reaſon and revelation concur to aſſure us, that the open rejection and avowed contempt of religion is an aggravated wickedneſs, as well as an hypocritical profeſſion. But our Lord's deſign is to expreſs in the ſtrongeſt manner poſſible, how odious and abominable their lukewarmneſs was to him; as if he ſhould ſay, "Your ſtate is ſo bad, that you cannot change for the worſe; I would rather you were any thing than what you are." You are ready to obſerve, that the lukewarm profeſſor is in reality wicked and corrupt at heart, a ſlave to ſin, and an enemy to God, as well as the avowed ſinner; and therefore they are both hateful in the ſight of God, and both in a ſtate of condemnation. But there are ſome aggravations peculiar to the lukewarm profeſſor that render him peculiarly odious; as, 1. He adds the ſin of an hypocritical profeſſion to his other ſins. The wickedneſs of real irreligion, and the wickedneſs of falſely pretending to be religious, meet and center in him at once. 2. To all this he adds the guilt of preſumption, pride, and ſelf-flattery, imagining he is in a ſafe ſtate and in favour with God; whereas he that makes no pretenſions to religion, has no ſuch umbrage for this conceit and deluſion. Thus the miſerable Laodiceans "thought themſelves rich, and increaſed in goods, and in need of nothing." 3. Hence it follows, that the lukewarm profeſſor is in the moſt dangerous condition, as he is not liable to conviction, nor ſo likely to be brought to repentance. Thus publicans

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and harlots received the goſpel more readily than the ſelf-righteous Phariſees. 4. The honour of God and religion is more injured by the negligent, unconſcientious behaviour of theſe Laodiceans, than by the vices of thoſe who make no pretenſions to religion; with whom therefore its honour has no connection. On theſe accounts you ſee lukewarmneſs is more aggravatedly ſinful and dangerous than entire coldneſs about religion.

So then, ſays Chriſt, *Becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my mouth:* this is their doom; as if he ſhould ſay, "As lukewarm water is more diſagreeable to the ſtomach than either cold or hot, ſo you, of all others, are the moſt abominable to me. I am quite ſick of ſuch profeſſors, and I will caſt them out of my church, and reject them for ever."

My preſent deſign is to expoſe the peculiar abſurdity and wickedneſs of lukewarmneſs or indifferency in religion; a diſeaſe that has ſpread its deadly contagion far and wide among us, and calls for a ſpeedy cure. And let me previouſly obſerve to you, that, if I do not offer you ſufficient arguments to convince your own reaſon of the abſurdity and wickedneſs of ſuch a temper, then you may ſtill indulge it; but that if my arguments are ſufficient, then ſhake off your ſloth, and be fervent in ſpirit; and if you neglect your duty, be it at your peril.

In illuſtrating this point I ſhall proceed upon this plain principle, *That Religion is, of all things, the moſt important in itſelf, and the moſt intereſting to us.* This we cannot deny, without openly pronouncing it an impoſture. If there be a God, as religion teaches us, he is the moſt glorious, the moſt venerable, and the moſt lovely Being; and nothing can be ſo important to us as his favour, and nothing ſo terrible as his diſpleaſure. If he be our Maker, our Benefactor, our Lawgiver and Judge, it muſt be our greateſt concern to ſerve him with all our might. If Jeſus Chriſt be

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ſuch a Saviour as our religion repreſents, and we profeſs to believe, he demands our warmeſt love and moſt lively ſervices. If eternity, if heaven and hell, and the final judgment, are realities, they are certainly the moſt auguſt, the moſt awful, important, and intereſting realities; and, in compariſon of them, the moſt weighty concerns of the preſent life are but trifles, dreams, and ſhadows. If prayer and other religious exerciſes are our duty, certainly they require all the vigour of our ſouls; and nothing can be more abſurd or incongruous than to perform them in a languid, ſpiritleſs manner, as if we knew not what we were about. If there be any life within us, theſe are proper objects to call it forth: if our ſouls are endowed with active powers, here are objects that demand their utmoſt exertion. Here we can never be ſo much in earneſt as the caſe requires. Trifle about any thing, but O do not trifle here! Be careleſs and indifferent about crowns and kingdoms, about health, life, and all the world, but O be not careleſs and indifferent about ſuch immenſe concerns as theſe!

But to be more particular: let us take a view of a lukewarm temper in various attitudes, or with reſpect to ſeveral objects, particularly towards God—towards Jeſus Chriſt—a future ſtate of happineſs or miſery—and in the duties of religion; and in each of theſe views we cannot but be ſhocked at ſo monſtrous a temper, eſpecially if we conſider our difficulties and dangers in a religious life, and the eagerneſs and activity of mankind in inferior purſuits.

1. Conſider who and what God is. He is the original uncreated beauty, the ſum total of all natural and moral perfections, the origin of all the excellencies that are ſcattered through this glorious univerſe; he is the ſupreme good, and the only proper portion for our immortal ſpirits. He alſo ſuſtains the moſt majeſtic and endearing relations to us; our Father, our Preſerver and Benefactor, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. And is ſuch a Being to be put off with heartleſs,

leſs, lukewarm ſervices? What can be more abſurd or impious than to diſhonour ſupreme excellency and beauty with a languid love and eſteem; to trifle in the preſence of the moſt venerable Majeſty; treat the beſt of Beings with indifferency; to be careleſs about our duty to ſuch a Father; to return ſuch a Benefactor only inſipid complimental expreſſions of gratitude; to be dull and ſpiritleſs in obedience to ſuch a Lawgiver; and to be indifferent about the favour or diſpleaſure of ſuch a Judge! I appeal to Heaven and earth, if this be not the moſt ſhocking conduct imaginable. Does not your reaſon pronounce it horrid and moſt daringly wicked? And yet thus is the great and bleſſed God treated by the generality of mankind. It is moſt aſtoniſhing that he ſhould bear with ſuch treatment ſo long, and that mankind themſelves are not ſhocked at it: but ſuch the caſe really is. And are there not ſome lukewarm Laodiceans in this aſſembly? Jeſus knows your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; and it is fit you ſhould alſo know them. May you not be convinced, upon a little inquiry, that your hearts are habitually indifferent towards God? You may indeed entertain a ſpeculative eſteem or a good opinion of him, but are your ſouls alive towards him? Do they burn with his love? And are you fervent in ſpirit when you are ſerving him? Some of you, I hope, amid all your infirmities, can give comfortable anſwers to theſe inquiries. But alas! how few! But yet as to ſuch of you as are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, you are the moſt abominable creatures upon earth to an holy God.—*Be zealous*, be warm, *therefore, and repent.* (ver. 19.)

2. Is lukewarmneſs a proper temper towards Jeſus Chriſt? Is this a ſuitable return for that love which brought him down from his native paradiſe into our wretched world? That love which kept his mind for thirty-three painful and tedious years intent upon this one object, the ſalvation of ſinners? That love which rendered him cheerfully patient of the ſhame, the curſe,

curſe, the tortures of crucifixion, and all the agonies of the moſt painful death? That love which makes him the ſinner's friend ſtill in the courts of Heaven, where he appears as our prevailing Advocate and Interceſſor? Bleſſed Jeſus! is lukewarmneſs a proper return to thee for all this kindneſs? No; methinks devils cannot treat thee worſe. My fellow-mortals, my fellow-ſinners, who are the objects of all this love, can you put him off with languid devotions and faint ſervices? Then every grateful and generous paſſion is extinct in your ſouls, and you are qualified to venture upon every form of ingratitude and baſeneſs. O was Chriſt indifferent about your ſalvation? Was his love lukewarm towards you? No; your ſalvation was the object of his moſt intenſe application night and day through the whole courſe of his life, and it lay neareſt his heart in the agonies of death. For this he had *a baptiſm to be baptized with*, a baptiſm, an immerſion in tears and blood; *and how am I ſtraitened*, ſays he, *till it be accompliſhed!* For this, *with deſire he deſired to eat his laſt paſſover*, becauſe it introduced the laſt ſcene of his ſufferings. His love! what ſhall I ſay of it? What language can deſcribe its ſtrength and ardor? *His love was ſtrong as death; the coals thereof were coals of fire, which had a moſt vehement flame: many waters could not quench it, nor the floods drown it.* Cant. viii. 6, 7. Never did a tender mother love her ſucking child with a love equal to his. Never was a father more earneſt to reſcue an only ſon from the hands of a murderer, or to pluck him out of the fire, than Jeſus was to ſave periſhing ſinners. Now to neglect him after all; to forget him; or to think of him with indifferency, as though he were a being of but little importance, and we but little obliged to him, what is all this but the moſt unnatural, barbarous ingratitude, and the moſt ſhocking wickedneſs? Do you not expect everlaſting happineſs from him purchaſed at the expence of his blood? And can you hope for ſuch an immenſe bleſſing from him without feeling

feeling yourſelves moſt ſenſibly obliged to him? Can you hope he will do ſo much for you, and can you be content to do nothing for him, or to go through his ſervice with lukewarmneſs and langour, as if you cared not how you hurried through it, or how little you had to do with it? Can any thing be more abſurd or impious than this? Methinks you may defy hell to ſhew a worſe temper. May not Chriſt juſtly wiſh you were either cold or hot; wiſh you were any thing, rather than thus lukewarm towards him under a profeſſion of friendſhip? Alas! my brethren, if this be your habitual temper, inſtead of being ſaved by him you may expect he will reject you with the moſt nauſeating diſguſt and abhorrence. But,

3. Is lukewarmneſs and indifferency a ſuitable temper with reſpect to a future ſtate of happineſs or miſery? Is it a ſuitable temper with reſpect to an happineſs far exceeding the utmoſt bounds of our preſent thoughts and wiſhes; an happineſs equal to the largeſt capacities of our ſouls in their moſt improved and perfected ſtate; an happineſs beyond the grave, when all the enjoyments of this tranſitory life have taken an eternal flight from us, and leave us hungry and famiſhing for ever, if theſe be our only portion; an happineſs that will laſt as long as our immortal ſpirits, and never fade or fly from us? Or are lukewarmneſs and indifferency a ſuitable temper with reſpect to a miſery beyond expreſſion, beyond conception dreadful; a miſery inflicted by a God of almighty power and inexorable juſtice upon a number of obſtinate, incorrigible rebels for numberleſs, wilful, and daring provocations, inflicted on purpoſe to ſhew his wrath and make his power known; a miſery proceeding from the united fury of divine indignation, of turbulent paſſions, of a guilty conſcience, of malicious, tormenting devils; a miſery (who can bear up under the horror of the thought!) that ſhall laſt as long as the eternal God ſhall live to inflict it; as long as ſin ſhall continue evil to deſerve it; as long as an immortal ſpirit ſhall

ſhall endure to bear it; a miſery that ſhall never be mitigated, never intermitted, never, never, never ſee an end? And remember, that a ſtate of happineſs or miſery is not far remote from us, but near us, juſt before us; the next year, the next hour, or the next moment, we may enter into it; is a ſtate for which we are now candidates, now upon trial; now our eternal all lies at ſtake: and, O ſirs, does an inactive, careleſs poſture become us in ſuch a ſituation? Is a ſtate of ſuch happineſs, or ſuch miſery; is ſuch a ſtate juſt—juſt before us, a matter of indifferency to us? O can you be lukewarm about ſuch matters? Was ever ſuch prodigious ſtupidity ſeen under the canopy of heaven, or even in the regions of hell, which abound with monſtrous and horrid diſpoſitions? No; the hardieſt ghoſt below cannot make light of theſe things. Mortals! can you trifle about them? Well trifle a little longer, and your trifling will be over for ever. You may be indifferent about the improving of your time; but time is not indifferent whether to paſs by or not; it is determined to continue its rapid courſe, and hurry you into the ocean of eternity, though you ſhould continue ſleeping and dreaming through all the paſſage. Therefore awake, ariſe; exert yourſelves before your doom be unchangeably fixed. If you have any fire within you, here let it burn; if you have any active powers, here let them be exerted; here or no where, and on no occaſion. Be active, be in earneſt where you ſhould be; or debaſe and ſink yourſelves into ſtocks and ſtones, and eſcape the curſe of being reaſonable and active creatures. Let the criminal condemned to die to-morrow, be indifferent about a reprieve or a pardon; let a drowning man be careleſs about catching at the only plank that can ſave him; but O do not you be careleſs and indifferent about eternity, and ſuch amazing realities as heaven and hell. If you diſbelieve theſe things, you are infidels; if you believe theſe things, and yet are unaffected with them, you are worſe than infidels:

you

you are a ſort of ſhocking ſingularities, and prodigies in nature. Not hell itſelf can find a precedent of ſuch a conduct. The devils believe, and tremble; you believe, and trifle with things whoſe very name ſtrike ſolemnity and awe through heaven and hell. But,

4. Let us ſee how this lukewarm temper agrees with the duties of religion. And as I cannot particularize them all, I ſhall only mention an inſtance or two. View a lukewarm profeſſor in prayer; he pays to an omniſcient God the compliment of a bended knee, as though he could impoſe upon him with ſuch an empty pretence. When he is addreſſing the Supreme Majeſty of Heaven and earth he hardly ever recollects in whoſe preſence he is, or whom he is ſpeaking to, but ſeems as if he were worſhipping without an object, or pouring out empty words into the air: perhaps through the whole prayer he had not ſo much as one ſolemn, affecting thought of that God whoſe name he ſo often invoked. Here is a criminal petitioning for pardon ſo careleſsly, that he ſcarcely knows what he is about. Here is a needy famiſhing beggar pleading for ſuch immenſe bleſſings as everlaſting ſalvation, and all the joys of heaven, ſo lukewarmly and thoughtleſsly as if he cared not whether his requeſts were granted or not. He is an obnoxious offender confeſſing his ſins with an heart untouched with ſorrow; worſhipping the living God with a dead heart; making great requeſts, but he forgets them as ſoon as he riſes from his knees, and is not at all inquiſitive what became of them, and whether they were accepted or not. And can there be a more ſhocking, impious, and daring conduct than this? To trifle in the royal preſence would not be ſuch an audacious affront. For a criminal to catch flies or ſport with a feather when pleading with his judge for his pardon, would be but a faint ſhadow of ſuch religious trifling! What are ſuch prayers but ſolemn mockeries and diſguiſed inſults? And yet, is not this the uſual method in which many of you addreſs the great God! The words pro-

ceed no farther than from your tongue: you do not pour them out from the bottom of your hearts; they have no life or ſpirit in them, and you hardly ever reflect upon their meaning. And when you have talked away to God in this manner, you will have it to paſs for a prayer. But ſurely ſuch prayers muſt bring down a curſe upon you inſtead of a bleſſing: ſuch ſacrifices muſt be *an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xv. 8. and it is aſtoniſhing that he has not mingled your blood with your ſacrifices, and ſent you from your knees to hell, from thoughtleſs, unmeaning prayer to real blaſphemy and torture.

The next inſtance I ſhall mention is with regard to the word of God. You own it divine; you profeſs it the ſtandard of your religion, and the moſt excellent book in the world. Now, if this be the caſe, it is God that ſpeaks to you; it is God that ſends you an epiſtle when you are reading or hearing his word. How impious and provoking then muſt it be to neglect it, to let it lie by you as an antiquated, uſeleſs book, or to read it in a careleſs, ſuperficial manner, and hear it with an inattentive, wandering mind? How would you take it, if, when you ſpoke to your ſervant about his own intereſt, he ſhould turn away from you, and not regard you? Or if you ſhould write a letter to your ſon, and he ſhould not ſo much as carefully read it, or labour to underſtand it? And do not ſome of you treat the ſacred oracles in this manner? You make but little uſe of your Bible, but to teach your children to read: Or if you read, or hear its contents yourſelves, are you not unaffected with them? One would think you would be all attention and reverence to every word; you would drink it in, and thirſt for it as new-born babes for their mother's milk; you would feel its energy, and acquire the character of that happy man to whom the God of heaven vouchſafes to look; you would tremble at his word. It reveals the only method of your ſalvation; it contains the only charter of all your bleſſings. In

ſhort,

ſhort, you have the neareſt perſonal intereſt in it, and can you be unconcerned hearers of it? I am ſure your reaſon and conſcience muſt condemn ſuch ſtupidity and indifferency as incongruous, and outrageouſly wicked.

And now let me remind you of the obſervation I made upon entering upon this ſubject, that if I ſhould not offer ſufficient matter of conviction, you might go on in your lukewarmneſs; but if your own reaſon ſhould be fully convinced that ſuch a temper is moſt wicked and unreaſonable, then you might indulge it at your peril. What do you ſay now in the iſſue? Ye modern Laodiceans, are you not yet ſtruck with horror at the thought of that inſipid, formal, ſpiritleſs religion you have hitherto been contented with? And do you not ſee the neceſſity of following the advice of Chriſt to the Laodicean church, *be zealous*, be fervent for the future, *and repent*, bitterly repent of what is paſt? To urge this the more, I have two conſiderations in reſerve, of no ſmall weight. 1. Conſider the difficulties and dangers in your way. O ſirs, if you knew the difficulty of the work of your ſalvation, and the great danger of miſcarrying in it, you could not be ſo indifferent about it, nor could you flatter yourſelves ſuch languid endeavours will ever ſucceed. It is a labour, a ſtriving, a race, a warfare; ſo it is called in the ſacred writings: but would there be any propriety in theſe expreſſions if it were a courſe of ſloth and inactivity? Conſider, you have ſtrong luſts to be ſubdued, an hard heart to be broken, a variety of graces which you are entirely deſtitute of to be implanted and cheriſhed, and that in an unnatural ſoil where they will not grow without careful cultivation, and that you have many temptations to be encountered and reſiſted. In ſhort, you muſt be made new men, quite other creatures than you now are. And O! can this work be ſucceſsfully performed while you make ſuch faint and feeble efforts? Indeed God is the Agent, and all your beſt endeavours can never effect

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the bleſſed revolution without him. But his aſſiſtance is not to be expected in the neglect, or careleſs uſe of means, nor is it intended to encourage idleneſs, but activity and labour; and when he comes to work, he will ſoon inflame your hearts, and put an end to your lukewarmneſs. Again, your dangers are alſo great and numerous; you are in danger from preſumption and from deſpondency; from coldneſs, from lukewarmneſs, and from falſe fires and enthuſiaſtic heats; in danger from ſelf-righteouſneſs, and from open wickedneſs, from your own corrupt hearts, from this enſnaring world, and from the temptations of the devil: you are in great danger of ſleeping on in ſecurity without ever being thoroughly awakened; or, if you ſhould be awakened, you are in danger of reſting ſhort of vital religion; and in either of theſe caſes you are undone for ever. In a word, dangers crowd thick around you on every hand, from every quarter; dangers, into which thouſands, millions of your fellow-men have fallen and never recovered. Indeed, all things conſidered, it is very doubtful whether ever you will be ſaved who are now lukewarm and ſecure; I do not mean that your ſucceſs is uncertain if you be brought to uſe means with proper earneſtneſs; but alas! it is awfully uncertain whether ever you will be brought to uſe them in this manner. And, O ſirs, can you continue ſecure and inactive when you have ſuch difficulties to encounter with in a work of abſolute neceſſity, and when you are ſurrounded with ſo many and ſo great dangers? Alas! are you capable of ſuch deſtructive madneſs? O that you knew the true ſtate of the caſe! Such a knowledge would ſoon fire you with the greateſt ardor, and make you all life and vigour in this important work.

2. Conſider how earneſt and active men are in other purſuits. Should we form a judgment of the faculties of human nature by the conduct of the generality in religion, we ſhould be apt to conclude that men are mere ſnails, and that they have no active powers belonging

longing to them. But view them about other affairs, and you find they are all life, fire, and hurry. What labour and toil! what ſchemes and contrivances! what ſolicitude about ſucceſs! what fears of diſappointment! hands, heads, hearts, all buſy. And all this to procure thoſe enjoyments which at beſt they cannot long retain, and which the next hour may tear from them. To acquire a name or a diadem, to obtain riches or honours, what hardſhips are undergone! what dangers dared! what rivers of blood ſhed! how many millions of lives have been loſt! and how many more endangered! In ſhort, the world is all alive, all in motion with buſineſs. On ſea and land, at home and abroad, you will find men eagerly purſuing ſome temporal good. They grow grey-headed, and die in the attempt without reaching their end; but this diſappointment does not diſcourage the ſurvivors and ſucceſſors; ſtill they will continue, or renew the endeavour. Now here men act like themſelves; and they ſhew they are alive, and endowed with powers of great activity. And ſhall they be thus zealous and laborious in the purſuit of earthly vanities, and be quite indifferent and ſluggiſh in the infinitely more important concerns of eternity? What, ſolicitous about a mortal body, but careleſs about an immortal ſoul! Eager in purſuit of joys of a few years, but careleſs and remiſs in ſeeking an immortality of perfect happineſs! Anxious to avoid poverty, ſhame, ſickneſs, pain, and all the evils, real or imaginary, of the preſent life; but indifferent about an whole eternity of the moſt intolerable miſery! O the deſtructive folly, the daring wickedneſs of ſuch a conduct! My brethren, is religion the only thing which demands the utmoſt exertion of all your powers, and alas! is that the only thing in which you will be dull and inactive? Is everlaſting happineſs the only thing about which you will be remiſs? Is eternal puniſhment the only miſery which you are indifferent whether you eſcape or not? Is God the only good which you purſue with faint and lazy deſires? How

preposterous!

prepoſterous! how abſurd is this! You can love the world; you can love a father, a child, or a friend; nay, you can love that abominable, hateful thing, ſin: theſe you can love with ardor, ſerve with pleaſure, purſue with eagerneſs, and with all your might; but the ever-bleſſed God, and the Lord Jeſus, your beſt friend, you put off with a lukewarm heart and ſpiritleſs ſervices. O inexpreſſibly monſtrous! Lord, what is this that has befallen thine own offspring, that they are ſo diſaffected towards thee? Bleſſed Jeſus, what haſt thou done that thou ſhouldeſt be treated thus? O ſinners! what will be the conſequence of ſuch a conduct? Will that God take you into the boſom of his love? will that Jeſus ſave you by his blood, whom you make ſo light of? No, you may go and ſeek a heaven where you can find it; for God will give you none. Go, ſhift for yourſelves, or look out for a Saviour where you will; Jeſus will have nothing to do with you, except to take care to inflict proper puniſhment upon you if you retain this lukewarm temper towards him. Hence, by way of improvement, learn,

1. The vanity and wickedneſs of a lukewarm religion. Though you ſhould profeſs the beſt religion that ever came from heaven, it will not ſave you; nay, it will condemn you with peculiar aggravations if you are lukewarm in it. This ſpirit of indifferency diffuſed through it, turns it all into deadly poiſon. Your religious duties are all abominable to God while the vigour of your ſpirits is not exerted in them. Your prayers are inſults, and he will anſwer them as ſuch by terrible things in righteouſneſs. And do any of you hope to be ſaved by ſuch a religion? I tell you from the God of truth, it will be ſo far from ſaving you, that it will certainly ruin you for ever: continue as you are till the laſt, and you will be as certainly damned to all eternity as Judas, or Beelzebub, or any ghoſt in hell. But alas!

2. How common, how faſhionable is this lukewarm religion! This is the prevailing, epidemical ſin of

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our age and country; and it is well if it has not the ſame fatal effect upon us as it had upon Laodicea: Laodicea loſt its liberty, its religion, and its all. Therefore let Virginia hear and fear, and do no more ſo wickedly. We have thouſands of chriſtians, ſuch as they are; as many chriſtians as white men; but alas! they are generally of the Laodicean ſtamp; they are neither cold nor hot. But it is our firſt concern to know how it is with ourſelves; therefore let this inquiry go round this congregation: Are you not ſuch lukewarm chriſtians? Is there any fire and life in your devotions? Or are not all your active powers engroſſed by other purſuits?—Impartially make the inquiry, for infinitely more depends upon it than upon your temporal life.

3. If you have hitherto been poſſeſſed with this Laodicean ſpirit, I beſeech you indulge it no longer. You have ſeen that it mars all your religion, and will end in your eternal ruin: and I hope you are not ſo hardened as to be proof againſt the energy of this conſideration. Why halt you ſo long between two opinions? *I would you were cold or hot.* Either make thorough work of religion, or do not pretend to it. Why ſhould you profeſs a religion which is but an inſipid indifferency with you? Such a religion is good for nothing. Therefore awake, ariſe, exert yourſelves. Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; ſtrive earneſtly, or you are ſhut out for ever. Infuſe heart and ſpirit into your religion. "Whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might." Now, this moment, while my voice ſounds in your ears, now begin the vigorous enterprize. Now collect all the vigour of your ſouls, and breathe it out in ſuch a prayer as this, "Lord, fire this heart with thy love." Prayer is a proper introduction: for let me remind you of what I ſhould never forget, that God is the only Author of this ſacred fire; it is only he that can quicken you: therefore, ye poor careleſs creatures, fly to him in an agony of importunity, and never deſiſt, never grow weary till you prevail.

4. And

4. And laſtly, Let the beſt of us lament our lukewarmneſs, and earneſtly ſeek more fervour of ſpirit. Some of you have a little life; you enjoy ſome warm and vigorous moments; and O! they are divinely ſweet. But reflect how ſoon your ſpirits flag, your devotion cools, and your zeal languiſhes. Think of this, and be humble: think of this, and apply for more life. You know where to apply. Chriſt is your life: therefore cry to him for the communications of it. "Lord Jeſus! a little more life, a little more vital heat to a languiſhing ſoul." Take this method, and *you ſhall run, and not be weary; you ſhall walk, and not faint.* Iſaiah xl. 31.

SERMON XVI.

The Divine Government the Joy of our World.

PSALM xcvii. 1. *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the iſles be glad thereof.*

WISE and good rulers are juſtly accounted an extenſive bleſſing to their ſubjects. In a government where wiſdom ſits at the helm; and juſtice, tempered with clemency, holds the balance of retribution, liberty and property are ſecured, encroaching ambition is checked, helpleſs innocence is protected, and univerſal order is eſtabliſhed, and conſequently peace and happineſs diffuſe their ſtreams through the land. In ſuch a ſituation every heart muſt rejoice, every countenance look cheerful, and every boſom glow with gratitude to the happy inſtruments of ſuch extended beneficence.

But, on the other hand, *Wo to thee, O land, when thy king is a child.* Eccleſ. x. 16. weak, injudicious, humourſome,

humourſome, and peeviſh. This is the denunciation of Solomon, a ſage philoſopher, and an opulent king, whoſe ſtation, capacity, and inclination, conſpired to give him the deepeſt ſkill in politics: and this denunciation has been accompliſhed in every age. Empires have fallen, liberty has been fettered, property has been invaded, the lives of men have been arbitrarily taken away, and miſery and deſolation have broken in like a flood, when the government has been intruſted in the hands of tyranny, of luxury, or raſhneſs; and the advantages of climate and ſoil, and all others which nature could beſtow, have not been able to make the ſubjects happy under the baleful influence of ſuch an adminiſtration.

It has frequently been the unhappy fate of nations to be enſlaved to ſuch rulers; but ſuch is the unavoidable imperfection of all human governments, that when, like our own, they are managed by the beſt hands, they are attended with many calamities, and cannot anſwer ſeveral valuable ends; and from both theſe conſiderations we may infer the neceſſity of a divine government over the whole univerſe, and particularly over the earth, in which we are more eſpecially concerned. Without this ſupreme univerſal Monarch, the affairs of this world would fall into confuſion; and the concerns of the next could not be managed at all. The capacities of the wiſeſt of men are ſcanty, and not equal to all the purpoſes of government; and hence many affairs of importance will be unavoidably miſconducted; and dangerous plots and aggravated crimes may be undiſcovered for want of knowledge, or paſs unpuniſhed for want of power. A wiſe and good ruler may be diffuſing among his ſubjects all that happineſs which can reſult from the imperfect adminiſtration of mortals, but he may be tumbled from his throne, and his government thrown into the greateſt diſorder by a more powerful invader; ſo that the beſt ruler could not make his ſubjects laſtingly happy, unleſs he were univerſal monarch of the globe (a province too

great for any mortal) and above the reach of the ambitious power of others. Further, Human dominion cannot extend to the ſouls and conſciences of men: civil rulers can neither know nor govern them; and yet theſe muſt be governed and brought into ſubjection to the eternal laws of reaſon, otherwiſe tanquillity cannot ſubſiſt on earth; and eſpecially the great purpoſes of religion, which regard a future ſtate, cannot be anſwered.

Men are placed here to be formed by a proper education for another world, for another claſs, and other employments; but civil rulers cannot form them for theſe important ends, and therefore they muſt be under the government of one who has acceſs to their ſpirits, and can manage them as he pleaſes.

Deeply impreſt with theſe and other conſiderations, which ſhall be preſently mentioned, the Pſalmiſt is tranſported into this reflection, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the iſles be glad thereof.*

The Pſalmiſt ſeems to have the mediatorial empire of grace erected by Immanuel more immediately in view; and this indeed deſerves our ſpecial notice; but no doubt he included the divine government in general, which is a juſt ground of univerſal joy: and in this latitude I ſhall conſider the text.

Perſons in a tranſport are apt to ſpeak abruptly, and omit the particles of connection and inference uſual in calm reaſoning. Thus the Pſalmiſt cries out, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the iſles be glad thereof!* but if we reduce the paſſage into an argumentative form, it will ſtand thus, "The Lord reigneth, therefore let the earth rejoice; and let the multitude of the iſles be glad upon this account."

The earth may here ſignify, by an uſual metonymy, the rational inhabitants of the earth, who are eſpecially concerned in the divine government; or, by a beautiful poetical proſopopœia, it may ſignify the inanimate globe of the earth; and then it intimates that the divine

vine government is ſo important a bleſſing, that even the inanimate and ſenſeleſs creation would rejoice in it, were it capable of ſuch paſſions.* The iſles may likewiſe be taken figuratively for their inhabitants, particularly the Gentiles who reſided in them; or literally for tracts of land ſurrounded with water.

My preſent deſign is,

To illuſtrate this glorious truth, that Jehovah's ſupreme government is a juſt cauſe of univerſal joy.

For that end I ſhall conſider the divine government in various views, as legiſlative, providential, mediatorial, and judicial; and ſhew that in each of theſe views the divine government is matter of univerſal joy.

I. The Lord reigneth upon a throne of legiſlation, *let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the iſles be glad thereof.*

He is the one ſupreme Lawgiver, *Jam.* iv. 12. and is perfectly qualified for that important truſt. Nothing tends more to the advantage of civil ſociety than to have good laws eſtabliſhed, according to which mankind are to conduct themſelves, and according to which their rulers will deal with them. Now the ſupreme and univerſal King has erected and publiſhed the beſt laws for the government of the moral world, and of the human race in particular.

Let the earth then rejoice that God has clearly revealed his will to us, and not left us in inextricable perplexities about our duty to him and mankind. Human reaſon, or the light of nature, gives us ſome intimations of the duties of morality, even in our degenerate ſtate, and for this information we ſhould bleſs God; but alas! theſe diſcoveries are very imperfect, and we need ſupernatural revelation to make known to us the way of life. Accordingly, the Lord has favoured us with the ſacred oracles as a ſupplement to the

* By the ſame figure the inanimate parts of the creation are called upon to praiſe the Lord, *Pſalm* cxlviii. and are ſaid to travel and groan under the ſin of man. *Rom.* viii. 22.

the feeble light of nature; and in them we are fully "taught what is good, and what the Lord requireth of us." And what cauſe of joy is this! How painful are the anxieties that attend uncertainty about matters of duty! How diſtreſſing a doubtful, fluctuating mind in an affair of ſuch tremendous importance! This, no doubt, ſome of you that are conſcientious have had the experience of, in particular caſes, when you were at a loſs to apply to them the general directions in ſacred ſcripture.

Again, *Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the iſles be glad* that theſe laws are ſuitably enforced with proper ſanctions. The ſanctions are ſuch as become a God of infinite wiſdom, almighty power, inexorable juſtice, untainted holineſs, and unbounded goodneſs and grace, and ſuch as are agreeable to the nature of reaſonable creatures formed for an immortal duration. The rewards of obedience in the divine legiſlation are not ſuch toys as poſts of honour and profit, crowns and empires, which are the higheſt rewards that civil rulers can promiſe or beſtow; but rational peace and ſerenity of mind, undaunted bravery under the frowns of adverſity, a cheerful confidence in the divine guardianſhip under all the calamities of life, and in the future world an entire exemption from all ſorrow, and from ſin, the fruitful ſource of all our affections; the poſſeſſion of every good, the enjoyment of the divine preſence, of the ſociety of angels and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; in ſhort, the fruition of an happineſs above our preſent wiſhes, and equal to our then mature faculties, and all this for ever: theſe are the rewards of evangelical obedience, not indeed for its own ſake, but upon account of righteouſneſs of the bleſſed Jeſus; and if theſe fail to allure men to obedience, what can prevail? And how happy is it to live under a government, where virtue and religion, which in their own nature tend to our happineſs, are enforced with ſuch reſiſtleſs arguments! On the other hand, the penalty annext by the divine Lawgiver to diſobedience

dience is proportionably dreadful. To pine and languiſh under the ſecret curſe of angry Heaven, which, like a contagious poiſon, diffuſes itſelf through all the enjoyments of the wicked, *Mal.* ii. 2. to ſweat under the agonies of a guilty conſcience in this world, and in the future world to be baniſhed from the beatific preſence of God and all the joys of heaven; to feel the anguiſh and remorſe of guilty reflections; to burn in unquenchable fire; to conſume a miſerable eternity in the horrid ſociety of malignant ghoſts; and all this without the leaſt rational expectation; nay, without ſo much as a deluded hope of deliverance, or the mitigation of torture, through the revolutions of endleſs ages, all this is a faint repreſentation of the penalty annext to diſobedience; and it is a penalty worthy a God to inflict, and equal to the infinite malignity of ſin. And *let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the iſles be glad*, on account not only of the promiſſory ſanction of the law, but alſo of this tremendous penalty; for it flows not only from juſtice but from goodneſs, as well as its promiſe. The penalty is not annext to the law, nor will it be executed from a malignant pleaſure in the miſery of the creature, but it is annext from a regard to the happineſs of mankind, and will be executed upon individuals for the extenſive good of the whole as well as for the honourable diſplay of the divine purity and juſtice. A penalty is primarily intended to deter men from diſobedience. Now diſobedience tends in its own nature to make us miſerable; it renders it impoſſible, in the nature of things, that we ſhould be happy in the enjoyment of God and the employments of heaven, which are eternally and immutably contrary to ſinful depoſitions; and it fills us with thoſe malignant and unruly paſſions which cannot but make us uneaſy. Hence it follows, that, ſince the penalty tends to deter us from ſin, and ſince ſin naturally tends to make us miſerable, therefore the penalty is a kind of gracious incloſure round the pit of miſery, to keep us from falling into it: it

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is a friendly admonition not to drink poiſon; it is, in a word, a kind reſtraint upon us in our career to ruin; and indeed it is a bleſſing we could not ſpare; for we find, that, notwithſtanding the terror of the threatening, men will run on in ſin; and with how much more horrid alacrity and infernal zeal would they continue their courſe if there were no divine threatening to check and withhold them? The earth may alſo rejoice for the execution of the penalty of the divine law againſt ſin; for the conſpicuous puniſhment of the diſobedient may ſerve as a loud warning to all rational beings that now exiſt, or that may hereafter be created, not to offend againſt God; and thus it may be the means of preſerving them in obedience, and ſo promote the general good; and it may be that the number of thoſe that ſhall be puniſhed of the human and angelic natures, when compared to the number of reaſonable beings that ſhall be confirmed in holineſs and happineſs by obſerving their doom, may bear no more proportion than the number of criminals executed in a government as public examples, does to all the ſubjects of it; and conſequently ſuch puniſhment may be vindicated on the ſame principles. Farther, Juſtice is an amiable attribute in itſelf, and it appears ſo to all rational beings but criminals, whoſe intereſt it is that it ſhould not be diſplayed; and therefore the infliction of juſt puniſhment ſhould be matter of general joy, ſince it is amiable in itſelf. So it is in human governments; while we are innocent, we approve of the conduct of our magiſtrates in inflicting capital puniſhment upon notorious malefactors, though the malefactors themſelves view it with horror. But to proceed:

Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the iſles be glad, that the divine laws reach the inner man, and have power upon the hearts and conſciences of men. Human laws can only ſmooth our external conduct at beſt, but the heart in the mean time may be diſloyal and wicked. Now this defect is ſupplied by the laws

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of the King of Heaven, which are ſpiritual. They require a complete uniformity and ſelf-conſiſtency in us, that heart and life may agree; and therefore they are wiſely framed to make us entirely good. They have alſo an inimitable power upon the conſciences of men. Should all the world acquit us, yet we cannot acquit ourſelves when we violate them. The conſciouſneſs of a crime has made many an hardy offender ſweat and agonize with remorſe, though no human eye could witneſs to his offence. Now what cauſe of joy is it that theſe laws are quick and powerful, and that they are attended with almighty energy, which in ſome meaſure intimidates and reſtraints the moſt audacious, and inſpires the conſcientious with a pious fear of offending!

II. "The Lord reigneth by his Providence, let the earth therefore rejoice; and the multitude of the iſles be glad thereof."

The Providence of God is well deſcribed in our Shorter Catechiſm: "It is his moſt holy, wiſe, and powerful preſerving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." To particularize all the inſtances of providential government which may be matter of joy to the earth would be endleſs, therefore I ſhall only mention the following:

Let the earth rejoice; and *the multitude of the iſles be glad*, that the Lord reigneth over the kingdoms of the earth, and manages all their affairs according to his ſovereign and wiſe pleaſure. We ſometimes hear of wars and rumours of wars, of thrones tottering, and kingdoms falling, of the nations tumultuouſly raging and daſhing in angry conflict, like the waves of the boiſterous ocean. In ſuch a juncture we may ſay, *The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice. The floods lift up their waves. But the Lord reigneth, therefore the world ſhall be eſtabliſhed that it cannot be moved.—The Lord on high is mightier than the noiſe of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the ſea.* Pſalm xciii. Sometimes the ambition

ambition of foreign power, or the encroachments of domeſtic tyranny, may threaten our liberties, and perſecution may ſeem ready to diſcharge its artillery againſt the church of God, while every pious heart trembles for the ark, leſt it ſhould be carried into the land of its enemies. But the Lord reigneth! let the earth, let the church rejoice; *the eternal God is her refuge, and underneath her are the everlaſting arms.* Deut. xxxiii. 27. He will over-rule the various revolutions of the world for her good; he will give kings for her ranſom, Æthiopia and Seba for her; and the united powers of earth and hell ſhall not prevail againſt her. Though the frame of Nature ſhould be unhinged, we may find refuge in our God. Yet it muſt be owned, that the Lord for the chaſtiſement of his people may ſuffer their enemies to break in upon them, and may caſt them into the furnace of affliction. But let the earth rejoice, let the church be glad that the Lord reigneth over her moſt powerful enemies, and that they are but executing his will even when they have no regard to it, but are gratifying their own ambition. They are but a rod in the hand of a tender father, who corrects only to amend: and when he has uſed the rod for this gracious purpoſe, he will then lay it aſide. In this language the Almighty ſpeaks of the haughty Aſſyrian monarch who had puſhed his conqueſts ſo far and wide. Iſaiah x. 5, 6, 7. *O Aſſyrian, the rod of mine anger*, &c. *I will give him my commiſſion, and ſend him againſt the Jews, my favourite people; becauſe they are degenerated into an hypocritical nation, and he ſhall execute my orders.*—"Howbeit, he meaneth not ſo; it is far from his heart to obey my will in this expedition; but his only deſign is to aggrandize himſelf, and to deſtroy and cut off nations not a few." And when this inſtrument of the divine vengeance arrogates to himſelf the honour of his own ſucceſſes, with what juſt inſult and diſdain does the King of kings ſpeak of him! ver. 12—15. *Shall the ax boaſt itſelf againſt him that heweth therewith?*

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As if the rod ſhould ſhake itſelf againſt him that lifteth it up, &c. The deſign of God in theſe chaſtiſements is to purge away the iniquity of his people; and this is all the fruit of them to take away their ſin; and when this gracious deſign is anſwered, they ſhall be removed; *and the rod of the wicked ſhall not always lie upon the lot of the righteous.* Pſalm cxxv. 3. Now what cauſe of univerſal joy is this, that One infinitely wiſe ſits at the helm, and can ſteer the feeble veſſel of his church through all the outrageous ſtorms of this unfriendly climate and tempeſtuous ocean! He may ſeem at times to lie aſleep, but in the article of extreme danger he will awake and ſtill the winds and the ſea with his ſovereign mandate, *Peace, be ſtill.* Men may form deep and politic ſchemes, and purpoſe their accompliſhment in defiance of Heaven, *but God diſappointeth the devices of the crafty, ſo that their hands cannot perform their enterpriſe. He taketh the wiſe in their own craftineſs, and the counſel of the froward is carried headlong.* Job v. 12, 13. This was exemplified in the caſe of Ahithophel, 1 Sam. xvii. 14. The hearts of men, yea of kings, *are in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth them whitherſoever he will.* Prov. xxi. 1. (ſee alſo chap. xvi. 1, 9. and xix. 21.) And how joyful a thought this, that we are not at the arbitrary diſpoſal of our fellow-mortals, and that affairs are not managed according to their capricious pleaſure, but that our God is in the heaven, and doth whatſoever he pleaſeth! Pſalm cxv. 3.

Again, the church may be endangered by inteſtine diviſions and offences. The profeſſors of religion may ſtumble and fall, and ſo wound the hearts of the friends of Zion, and give matter of triumph and inſult to its enemies. Some may apoſtatize, and return like the dog to his vomit. A general lukewarmneſs may diffuſe itſelf through the church, and even thoſe who retain their integrity in the main may feel the contagion. Diviſions and animoſities may be inflamed, mutual love may be extinguiſhed, and a ſpirit of diſ-

cord ſucceed in its place. A moſt melancholy caſe this, and too much like our own; and our hearts ſink at times beneath the burden. But *the Lord reigneth; let the earth be glad.* He can reduce this confuſion into order, and make the wrath of man to praiſe him, and reſtrain the remainder of it. Pſalm lxxvi. 10. It is the peculiarity of divine wiſdom to educe good out of evil, and let us rejoice in it. God is ſupreme, and therefore can controul all the wicked paſſions of the mind. He has the reſidue of the ſpirit, and can rekindle the languiſhing flame of devotion. And O let us apply to him with the moſt vigorous and unwearied importunity for ſo neceſſary a bleſſing!

Again, we are expoſed to numberleſs accidental and unforeſeen dangers, which we cannot prevent nor encounter. Sickneſs and death may proceed from a thouſand unſuſpected cauſes. Our friends, our eſtates, and, in ſhort, all our earthly enjoyments, may be torn from us by a variety of accidents. We walk, as it were, in the dark, and may tread on remedileſs dangers ere we are aware. *But the Lord reigneth; let the earth be glad!* Contingent events are at his diſpoſal, and neceſſity at his controul. The ſmalleſt things are not beneath the notice of his providence, and the greateſt are not above it. Diſeaſes and misfortunes that ſeem to happen by chance, are commiſſioned by the Lord of all; and they that reſult evidently from natural cauſes are ſent by his almighty will. He ſays to one, go, and it goeth; and to another come, and it cometh: he orders the devaſtations that are made by the moſt outrageous elements. If flames lay our houſes in aſhes, they are kindled by his breath. If hurricanes ſweep through our land, and carry deſolation along with them, they perform his will, and can do nothing beyond it: his hand hurls the thunder, and directs it where to ſtrike. An arrow or a bullet ſhot at a venture in the heat of battle, is carried to its mark by divine direction. How wretched a world would this be were it not under the wiſe management

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of divine Providence! If chance or blind fate were its rulers, what deſolations would crowd upon us every moment! we ſhould ſoon be cruſhed in the ruins of a fallen world. Every wind that blows might blaſt us with death, and fire and water would mingle in a blended chaos, and bury us in their deſtruction. But ſo extenſive is the care of Providence, that even the ſparrows may find ſafety in it; and we cannot loſe ſo much as an hair of our heads without its permiſſion. *Matt.* x. 29, 30, 31. And how much more then are our perſons and our affairs of importance under its guardianſhip and direction!

Again, we are in perpetual danger from the malignant agency of infernal ſpirits, who watch all opportunities to ruin the ſouls, bodies, and eſtates of men. Theſe ſubtle ſpirits can inject inſnaring thoughts into our minds, and preſent ſuch images to the fancy as may allure the ſoul to ſin. This is repeatedly aſſerted in ſcripture, and atteſted by the melancholy experience of multitudes in all ages. That they have power alſo in the material world to raiſe ſtorms and tempeſts, and to ruin men's eſtates, and inflict diſeaſes on their bodies, is plain from the caſe of Job, and many in our Saviour's time, and from Satan's being called *the prince of the power of the air*; and his aſſociates *ſpiritual wickedneſſes in high places.* And what horrid devaſtations would theſe powerful and malicious beings ſpread through the world if they were not under the controul of divine Providence! They would perpetually haunt our minds with inſnaring or terrifying images, would meet us with temptations at every turn, and lead us willing captives to hell. They would alſo ſtrip us entirely of all temporal enjoyments, torture our bodies with grievous pains, or moulder them into duſt with conſuming and loathſome diſeaſes. *But the Lord reigneth; let the earth be glad.* He keeps the infernal lions in chains, and reſtrains their rage. He ſees all their ſubtle plots and machinations againſt his feeble ſheep, and baffles them all. "He will not ſuffer his people

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to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but with the temptation will alſo make a way to eſcape. 1 *Cor.* x. 13. And when he ſuffers them to be buffetted, his grace ſhall be ſufficient for them, &c. 2 *Cor.* xii. 7, 9. He hath alſo (as Satan himſelf confeſſed with regard to Job) made an hedge about us, about our houſes, and about all that we have on every ſide, *Job* i. 10. and hence we live and enjoy the bleſſings of life. What cauſe of grateful joy is this! Who would not rather die than live in a world ungoverned by divine Providence! This earth would ſoon be turned into a hell, if the infernal armies were let looſe upon it.

III. The Lord reigneth upon a throne of grace! "let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the iſles be glad."

It is the mediatorial government of the Meſſiah which the Pſalmiſt had more immediately in view; and this is the principal cauſe of joy to the earth and its guilty inhabitants. This is a kind of government peculiar to the human race: the upright angels do not need it, and the fallen angels are not favoured with it. This is inveſted in the perſon of Immanuel, "who is made head over all things to his church," *Epheſ.* i. 22. "to whom all power in heaven and earth is given." *Matt.* xi. 27. and xxviii. 18. This is the kingdom deſcribed in ſuch auguſt language in *Dan.* ii. ver. 44, 45. and vii. 14. *Luke* i. 32, 33. Hence that Jeſus who was mocked with a crown of thorns, and condemned as a criminal at Pilate's bar, wears on his veſture and on his thigh this majeſtic inſcription, *King of kings, and Lord of lords.* Rev. xix. 16. And behold I bring you glad tidings; this kingdom of God is come unto you, and you are called to become its ſubjects, and ſhare in its bleſſings. Wherever the goſpel is preached, there Jehovah ſits upon a mercy-ſeat in majeſty tempered with condeſcending grace. From thence he invites rebels that had rejected his government to return to their allegiance, and paſſes an act of

grace

grace upon all that comply with the invitation. To his throne of grace he invites all to come, and offers them the richeſt bleſſings. From thence he publiſhes peace on earth, and good-will towards men. From thence he offers pardon to all that will ſubmit to his government, and renounce their ſins, thoſe weapons of rebellion. From thence he diſtributes the influences of his Spirit to ſubdue obſtinate hearts into cheerful ſubmiſſion, to ſupport his ſubjects under every burden, and furniſh them with ſtrength for the ſpiritual warfare. He ſubdues their rebellious corruptions, animates their languiſhing graces, and protects them from their ſpiritual enemies.* He enacts laws for the regulation of his church, appoints ordinances for her edification, and qualifies miniſters to diſpenſe them. He hath *aſcended up on high*; he hath received gifts for men; and theſe he hath diſtributed, and given *ſome, prophets; and ſome, apoſtles; and ſome, evangeliſts; and ſome, paſtors and teachers; for the perfecting of the ſaints, for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt.* Epheſ. iv. 8, 11, 12. And it is by virtue of authority derived from him that his miniſters now officiate, and you receive his ordinances at their hands. Now how happy are we, that we live under the mediatorial adminiſtration! under the empire of grace!—*Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the iſles be glad* upon this account. And let us pray that all nations may become the willing ſubjects of our gracious ſovereign. If this adminiſtration of grace had not been erected, in what a miſerable ſituation ſhould we have been! guilty, miſerable, and hopeleſs! Let us rejoice that the King of heaven, from whom we had revolted, has not ſuffered us to periſh without remedy in our unnatural rebellion, but holds out the ſceptre of his grace to us, that we may touch it and live.

IV. And

* See his reign moſt beautifully deſcribed under the type of *Solomon*. Pſalm lxxii.

IV. And laſtly, the Lord will reign ere long upon a throne of univerſal judgment conſpicuous to the aſſembled univerſe, *let the earth* therefore *rejoice*, and *the multitude of the iſles be glad.*

Here I may borrow the inimitable language of the Pſalmiſt, Pſalm xcvi. 10, 13. *The Lord ſhall judge the people righteouſly. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the ſea roar, and the fulneſs thereof: let the fields be joyful, and all that is therein; then ſhall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh! for he cometh to judge the earth.* "He ſhall judge the world with righteouſneſs and the people with his truth." This will indeed be a day of inſupportable terror to his enemies, Rev. vi. 15, 16. but, on many accounts, it will prove a day of joy and triumph.

This day will unfold all the myſteries of divine Providence, which are now unſearchable. There are many diſpenſations now for which we cannot account. Many bleſſings are beſtowed, many calamities fall, and many events happen, of which mortals cannot ſee the reaſon. Proſperity is the lot of ſome who ſeem the peculiar objects of divine vengeance; and many groan under afflictions who ſeem more proper objects of providential beneficence. We are often led into ways, the end of which we cannot ſee, and are bewildered in various perplexities about the deſigns of divine Providence towards us. Hence alſo impiety takes occaſion to cavil at the ways of God as not equal, and to cenſure his government as weakly adminiſtered. But in that day all his ways will appear to be judgment. The clouds and darkneſs that now ſurround them will vaniſh, and the beams of wiſdom, goodneſs, and juſtice, will ſhine illuſtrious before the whole univerſe, and every creature ſhall join the plaudit, *He hath done all things well!* Now we can at beſt but ſee a few links in the chain of providence, but then we ſhall ſee it all entire and complete; then the whole ſyſtem will be expoſed to view at once, which will diſcover the ſtrange ſymmetry, connections, dependencies, and references of all the parts,

parts, without which we can no more judge of the excellency of the procedure than a ruſtic could tell the uſe of the ſeveral parts of a watch, if he ſaw them ſcattered in various places. Let the earth therefore be glad in expectation of this glorious diſcovery.

Again, let the earth rejoice that in that day the preſent unequal diſtributions of Providence will be for ever adjuſted, and regulated according to the ſtricteſt juſtice. This is not the place or ſeaſon for retribution, and therefore we need not be ſurpriſed that the bleſſings and calamities of this life are not diſpoſed according to men's real characters; but then every man ſhall be dealt with according to his works. Oppreſſed innocence will be redreſſed, and inſolence for ever mortified: calumny will be confuted, and flattery expoſed: Lazarus ſhall be comforted, and Dives tormented: impious kings ſhall be driven into the infernal pit, while pious beggars ſhall be advanced to the heights of happineſs. In ſhort, all matters will then be ſet right, and therefore let the earth rejoice.

Again, let the earth rejoice that in that day the righteous ſhall be completely delivered from all ſin and ſorrow, and advanced to the perfection of heavenly happineſs. Then they ſhall enter upon the full fruition of that bliſs, which is now the object of all their anxious hopes and earneſt labours.

But we muſt change the ſcene into tragedy, and take a view of trembling criminals hearing their dreadful doom, and ſinking to hell with horrible anguiſh. And muſt the earth rejoice in this too? Yes, but with a ſolemn tremendous joy. Even the condemnation and everlaſting miſery of theſe is right and juſt, is amiable and glorious; and God, angels, and ſaints, will at the great day rejoice in it. The awful grandeur of juſtice will be illuſtrated in it; and this is matter of joy. The puniſhment of irreclaimable impenitents will be an effectual warning to all reaſonable beings, and to all future creations, as has been obſerved; and by it they will be deterred from diſobedience;

and

and this is the cauſe of joy. Theſe criminals will then be beyond repentance and reformation, and therefore it is impoſſible in the nature of things they ſhould be happy; and why then ſhould Heaven be encumbered with them? Is it not cauſe of joy that they ſhould be confined in priſon who have made themſelves unfit for ſociety? In the preſent ſtate ſinners are objects of our compaſſion and ſorrow, and the whole creation mourns for them. Rom. viii. 22. But God will then rejoice in their ruin, and laugh at their calamity, Prov. i. 26. and all dutiful creatures will join in his joy.

Thus you ſee that the Lord reigneth. And who, poor feeble ſaints, who is this that ſuſtains this univerſal government, and rules the whole creation according to his pleaſure? It is your Father, your Saviour, your Friend! It is he that entertains a tenderer regard for you than ever glowed in an human breaſt. And can you be ſo fooliſh as to regard the ſurmiſes of unbelief? Can you force yourſelves to fear that he will ever leave or forſake you? Can you ſuſpect that he will ſuffer you to fall an helpleſs prey to your enemies? No, your Lord reigneth, therefore rejoice. *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I ſay rejoice.* While he keeps the throne of the univerſe, you ſhall be ſafe and happy. Your Father is greater than all, and none can pluck you out of his hands. Remember he ſits upon a throne of grace, therefore come to him with boldneſs. You may ſmile at calamity and confuſion, and rejoice amid the ruins of the world: you may borrow the language of David, Pſalm xlvi. or of Habbakuk, ch. iii. ver. 17, 18. Remember alſo, that as he is a King he demands your cheerful obedience, and therefore make his ſervice the buſineſs of your life.

And, unhappy ſinners! let me aſk you, Who is this that reigns King of the univerſe? Why, it is he whom you have rejected from being King over you; it is he againſt whom you have rebelled, and who is therefore your juſt enemy. And are you able to make

good

good your cauſe againſt him who has univerſal nature at his nod? How dreadful is your ſituation! That which may make the earth rejoice, may make you fear and tremble. The Lord reigneth, let ſinners tremble. You muſt fall before him, if you will not cheerfully ſubmit to his government. Let me therefore renew the uſual neglected declaration, "He ſits upon a throne of grace." Let me once more in his name proclaim reconciliation! reconciliation! in your ears, and invite you to return to your allegiance. Lay down your arms, forſake your ſins. Haſten, haſten to him. The ſword of his juſtice now hangs over your heads while I am managing the treaty with you; and therefore delay not. Yield! yield, or die; ſurrender, or periſh; for you have no other alternative. Submit, and you may join the general joy at his government. You upon earth, and devils and damned ghoſts in hell, are the only beings that are ſorry for it; but upon your ſubmiſſion your ſorrow ſhall be turned into joy, and you ſhall exult *when the Lord of all comes to judge the world with righteouſneſs, and the people with his truth.* Pſalm xcvi. 13.

SERMON XVII.

The Name of God proclaimed by himſelf.

EXOD. xxxiii. 18, 19. *And he ſaid, I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory. And he ſaid, I will make all my goodneſs paſs before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee—*

WITH

CHAP. xxxiv. 6, 7. *And the Lord paſſed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth; keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity and tranſgreſſion and ſin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.*

IT is a very natural and proper inquiry for a creature, "Where is God my Maker?" And an heart that loves him muſt long to know more of him, and is ever ready to join with Moſes in his petition, *Shew me, I pray thee, thy glory*; or, "Reveal thyſelf to me." That thou *art*, I infer from my own exiſtence, and from thy numerous works all around me; and that thou art *glorious*, I learn from the diſplay of thy perfections in thy vaſt creation, and in the government of the world thou haſt made. But, alas! how ſmall a portion of God is known in the earth? How faintly does thy glory ſhine in the feeble eyes of mortals? My knowledge of things in the preſent ſtate of fleſh and blood depends in a great meaſure upon the ſenſes; but God is a ſpirit inviſible to eyes of fleſh, and imperceptible through the groſs medium of ſenſation. How and when ſhall I know thee as thou art, thou great, thou dear unknown? In what a ſtrange ſituation am I! I am ſurrounded with thy omnipreſence, yet

yet I cannot perceive thee: thou art as near me as I am to myſelf; "thou knoweſt my riſing up and my ſitting down; thou underſtandeſt my thoughts afar off; thou penetrateſt my very eſſence, and knoweſt me altogether. Pſalm cxxxix. 2, &c." But to me thou dwelleſt in impervious darkneſs, or, which is the ſame, in light inacceſſible. *O that I knew where I might find him! Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himſelf on the right hand, that I cannot ſee him,* Job xxiii. 3, 8, 9. I ſee his perfections beaming upon me from all his works, and his providence ever-active ruling the vaſt univerſe, and diffuſing life, motion, and vigour through the whole: the virtue of his wiſdom, power, and goodneſs,

> Warms in the ſun, refreſhes in the breeze;
> Glows in the ſtars, and bloſſoms in the trees;
> Lives in all life, extends through all extent;
> Spreads undivided, operates unſpent;
> Inſpires our ſoul, informs our vital part.— POPE.

But where is the great Agent himſelf? Theſe are his works, and they are glorious; "in wiſdom has he made them all," but where is the divine Artificer? From theſe diſplays of his glory, which ſtrike my ſenſes, I derive ſome ideas of him; but O! how faint and glimmering! how unlike to the all-perfect Archetype and Original! I have alſo heard of him by the hearing of the ear: I read his own deſcriptions of himſelf in his word; I contemplate the repreſentations he has given of himſelf in his ordinances; and theſe are truly glorious, but they are adapted to the dark and groveling minds of mortals in this obſcure region, and fall infinitely ſhort of the original glory. I can think of him; I can love him; I can converſe and carry on a ſpiritual intercourſe with him; I feel him working in my heart; I receive ſenſible communications of love and grace from him; I dwell at times with unknown delight in the contemplation of his glory, and am

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tranſported with the ſurvey: but, alas! I cannot fully know him; I cannot dive deep into this myſtery of glory: my ſenſes cannot perceive him; and my intellectual powers in the preſent ſtate are not qualified to converſe with ſpiritual objects, and form a full acquaintance with them. O! if it would pleaſe my God to ſhew me his glory in its full luſtre! O that he would reveal himſelf to me ſo as that my ſenſes may aſſiſt my mind; if ſuch a manner of revelation be poſſible!

Such thoughts as theſe may naturally riſe in our minds; and probably ſome ſuch thoughts poſſeſſed the mind of Moſes, and were the occaſion of his requeſt, *I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory.*

Theſe chapters whence we have taken our ſubject of diſcourſe, preſent us with tranſactions that muſt ſeem very ſtrange and incredible to a mind that knows nothing of communion with the Father of Spirits, and that is furniſhed only with modern ideas.

Here is, not an angel, but a man; not a creature only but a ſinner, a ſinner once as depraved as ourſelves, in intimate audience with the Deity. Jehovah ſpeaks to him *face to face, as a man ſpeaketh to his friend.* Moſes uſes his intereſt in favour of a rebellious people, and it was ſo great that he prevailed: nay, to ſhew the force of his interceſſions, and to give him an encouragement to uſe them, God condeſcends to repreſent himſelf as reſtrained by this importunate petitioner, and unable to puniſh the ungrateful Iſraelites, while Moſes pleaded for them, *Let me alone*, ſays he, *that my wrath may wax hot againſt this people, that I may conſume them.* Exod. xxxii. 10. Moſes urges petition upon petition; and he obtains bleſſing upon bleſſing, as though God could deny nothing to ſuch a favourite. He firſt deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not immediately break out upon the Iſraelites, and cut them off, verſes 11—14. When he has gained this point, he advances farther, and pleads that God would be their Conductor through the wilderneſs,

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as he had been till that time, and lead them into the promiſed land. In this article God ſeems to put him off, and to devolve the work of conducting them upon himſelf; but Moſes, ſenſible that he was not equal to it, inſiſts upon the requeſt, and with a ſacred dexterity urges the divine promiſes to enforce it. Jehovah at length appears, as it were, partly prevailed upon, and promiſes to ſend his angel before him as his guide. Chap. xxxii. 34. and xxxiii. 2. But alas! an angel cannot fill up his place; and Moſes renews his petition to the Lord, and humbly tells him that he had rather ſtay, or even die where they were in the wilderneſs, than go up to the promiſed land without him. *If thy preſence go not with me, carry us not up hence*, chap. xxxiii. 15. "alas! the company of an angel, and the poſſeſſion of a land flowing with milk and honey will not ſatisfy us without thyſelf." His prayers prevail for this bleſſing alſo, and Jehovah will not deny him any thing. O the ſurpriſing prevalency of faith! O the efficacy of the fervent prayer of a righteous man!

And now, when his people are reſtored unto the divine favour, and God has engaged to go with them, has Moſes any thing more to aſk? Yes, he found he had indeed great intereſt with God, and O! he loved him, and longed, and languiſhed for a clearer knowledge of him: he found that after all his friendly interviews and conferences he knew but little of his glory; and now, thought he, it is a proper time to put in a petition for this manifeſtation; who knows but it may be granted! Accordingly he prays with a mixture of filial boldneſs and trembling modeſty, *I beſeech thee, ſhew me thy glory*: that is to ſay, "Now I am in converſe with thee, I perceive thou art the moſt glorious of all beings; but it is but little of thy glory I as yet know. O! is it poſſible for a guilty mortal to receive clearer diſcoveries of it? If ſo, I pray thee favour me with a more full and bright view." This petition is alſo granted, and the Lord promiſes

him,

him, *I will make all my goodneſs paſs before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.*

That you may the better underſtand this ſtrange hiſtory, I would have you obſerve a few things.

1ſt, In the earlier ages of the world it was a very common thing for God to aſſume ſome viſible form, and in it to converſe freely with his ſervants. Of this you frequently read in the hiſtory of the patriarchs, particularly of Adam, Abraham, Jacob, &c. It is alſo a tradition almoſt univerſally received in all ages, and among all nations, that God has ſometimes appeared in a ſenſible form to mortals. You can hardly meet with one heathen writer but what you will find in him ſome traces of this tradition. Upon this, in particular, are founded the many extravagant ſtories of the poets concerning the appearances of their gods. Had there been no original truth in ſome appearances of the true God to men, there would have been no colour for ſuch fables; for they would have evidently appeared groundleſs and unnatural to every reader. This tradition therefore was no doubt originally derived from the appearances of the Deity in a corporeal form in early ages.* Sometimes God aſſumed an human ſhape, and appeared as a man. Thus he appeared to Abraham, in company with two angels. Gen. xviii. and that good patriarch entertained them with food as travellers; yet one of them is repeatedly ſtiled the Lord, or Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God; ſee verſes 13, 20, 22, 26, &c. and ſpeaks in a language proper to him only, verſes 14, 21, &c. Sometimes

* Theſe appearances were probably made in the perſon of the Son, and might be intended as a prelude or earneſt of his aſſuming human nature, in the fulneſs of time, and his dwelling among mortals. He was the immediate Agent in the creation of the world; and the Father devolved upon him the whole œconomy of Providence from the beginning; and hence he had frequent occaſions to appear on ſome grand deſign. It cannot ſeem incredible that he ſhould thus aſſume ſome viſible form, to ſuch as believe that God was at length really *manifeſted in the fleſh*; for this temporary apparent incarnation cannot be deemed more ſtrange than his really being *made fleſh, and dwelling among us.*

Sometimes he appeared as a viſible brightneſs, or a body of light, or in ſome other ſenſible form of majeſty and glory. Thus he was ſeen by Moſes in the buſh as a burning fire; thus he attended the Iſraelites through the wilderneſs, in the ſymbol of fire by night, and a cloud by day; and thus he often appeared in the tabernacle, and at the dedication of Solomon's temple, in ſome ſenſible form of glorious brightneſs, which the Jews called the *Schechinah*; and looked upon as a certain ſymbol of the divine preſence.

2dly, You are to obſerve that God, who is a ſpirit, cannot be perceived by the ſenſes; nor were theſe ſenſible forms intended to repreſent the divine eſſence, which is wholly immaterial. You can no more ſee God than you can ſee your own ſoul; and a bodily form can no more repreſent his nature than ſhape or colour can repreſent a thought, or the affection of love. Yet,

3dly, It muſt be allowed that majeſtic and glorious emblems, or repreſentations of God exhibited to the ſenſes, may help to raiſe our ideas of him. When the ſenſes and the imagination aſſiſt the power of pure underſtanding, its ideas are more lively and impreſſive: and though no ſenſible repreſentations can bear any ſtrict reſemblance to the divine nature, yet they may ſtrike our minds deeply, and fill them with images of grandeur and majeſty. When I ſee a magnificent palace, it naturally tends to give me a great idea of the owner or builder. The retinue and pomp of kings, their glittering crowns, ſceptres, and other regalia, tend to inſpire us with ideas of majeſty. In like manner, thoſe ſenſible repreſentations of Deity, eſpecially when attended with ſome rational deſcriptions of the divine nature, may help us to form higher conceptions of the glory of God: and the want of ſuch repreſentations may occaſion leſs reverence and awe. For inſtance, had the deſcription of the Deity, *the Lord God merciful and gracious*, &c. been only ſuggeſted to the mind of Moſes as an object of calm contemplation, it

would

would not have ſtruck him with ſuch profound reverence, nor given him ſuch clear or impreſſive ideas as when it was proclaimed with a loud, majeſtic voice, and attended with a viſible glory too bright for mortal eyes. Human nature is of ſuch a make, that it cannot but be affected with things of this nature.

Conſider the matter well in the light which I have ſet it, and you may ſee ſomething of the propriety and good tendency of theſe appearances, and at the ſame time guard yourſelves againſt miſtakes. Let me now give you what I apprehend the true hiſtory of this remarkable and illuſtrious appearance of God to Moſes.

Moſes had enjoyed frequent interviews with God, and ſeen many ſymbols of his preſence and repreſentations of his glory; but he ſtill finds his knowledge of him very defective, and apprehends that God might give him ſome repreſentation of his glory more ſtriking and illuſtrious than any he had ſeen. Therefore, finding that now he was in great favour with him, he humbly moves this petition, *I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory*; "give me ſome more full and majeſtic repreſentation of thy glory than I have hitherto ſeen." The Lord anſwers him, "I will cauſe all my goodneſs," that is, a glorious, viſible repreſentation of my goodneſs, which is, "my glory, to paſs before thee," which may ſtrike thy ſenſes, and make them the medium of conveying to thy mind more illuſtrious and majeſtic ideas of my glory. And as no ſenſible forms can fully repreſent the ſpiritual eſſence and perfections of my nature, while I cauſe a viſible repreſentation of my glory to paſs before thee, I will at the ſame time proclaim the name of the Lord,* and deſcribe ſome of the principal perfections which conſtitute my glory and goodneſs.

* The LXX render the paſſage, *I will call by my name, the Lord, before thee.* And this is the moſt literal tranſlation of the Hebrew: they are rendered, *Inclamabo nominatim Jehova ante faciem tuam,* by Junius and Tremellius. According to this verſion the ſenſe ſeems to be, "When the ſymbol of my glory is paſſing by, I will give thee notice, and call by my name the Lord, that I may not paſs by unobſerved."

goodneſs. But ſo bright will be the luſtre of that form which I ſhall aſſume, that thou art not able to ſee my face, or the moſt ſplendid part of the repreſentation; the glory is too bright to be beheld by any mortal, ver. 20. But there is a place in a rock where thou mayeſt wait, and I will caſt darkneſs over it till the brighteſt part of the form of glory in which I ſhall appear is paſſed by, and then I will open a medium of light, and thou ſhalt ſee my back parts; that is, thoſe parts of the repreſentation which are leſs illuſtrious, and which paſs by laſt: the glory of theſe thou ſhalt be enabled to bear, but my face ſhall not be ſeen." Ver. 2—23.

Thus God condeſcended to promiſe; and when matters were duly prepared, he performs his engagement. The Lord aſſumed a viſible form of glory, *and paſſed by before him, and proclaimed his name*, which includes his perfections. Things are known by their names, and God is known by his attributes, therefore his name includes his attributes. The proclamation ran in this auguſt ſtyle, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin.* Moſes was ſtruck with reverence and admiration, and bowed and worſhipped.

My preſent deſign is to explain the ſeveral names and perfections here aſcribed to God, and ſhew that they all concur to conſtitute his goodneſs. For you muſt obſerve this is the connection. Moſes prays for a view of God's glory, God promiſes him a view of his goodneſs, which intimates that his goodneſs is his glory; and when he deſcribes his goodneſs, what is the deſcription? It is *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping* mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity,*

* The Hebrews obſerve, that the firſt letter of the word tranſlated *keeping*, is much larger than uſual; which ſhews that a particular emphaſis is to be laid upon it; as if he ſhould ſay, "I moſt ſtrictly and richly keep mercy for thouſands; the treaſure is immenſe, and can never be exhauſted."

tranſgreſſion, and ſin. That theſe attributes belong to his goodneſs we eaſily and naturally conceive; but what ſhall we think of his punitive juſtice, that awful and tremendous attribute, the object of terror and averſion to ſinners? Is that a part of his goodneſs too? Yes, when God cauſes his goodneſs to paſs before Moſes, he proclaims as one part of it, that *he will by no means clear the guilty; and that he viſits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.* This awful attribute is an important part of his goodneſs, and without it he could not be good, amiable, or glorious.

I am now about to enter upon a ſubject the moſt ſublime, auguſt, and important, that can come within the compaſs of human or angelic minds, the name and perfections of the infinite and ever-glorious God. I attempt it with trembling and reverence, and I foreſee I ſhall finiſh it with ſhame and confuſion: for *who by ſearching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?* Job xi. 7. The queſtion of Agar mortifies the pride of human knowledge; *What is his name, or what is his ſon's name, if thou canſt tell?* Prov. xxx. 4. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.* Pſalm cxxxix. 6. *It is as high as Heaven, what can I know? deeper than hell, what can I do? the meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the ſea.* Job xi. 8, 9. Lend me your ſkill, ye angels, who have ſeen his face without intermiſſion from the firſt moment of your happy exiſtence; or ye ſaints above, that *ſee him as he is, and know even as you are known,* inſpire me with your exalted ideas, and teach me your celeſtial language, while I attempt to bring Heaven down to earth, and reveal its glories to the eyes of mortals. In vain I aſk; their knowledge is incommunicable to the inhabitants of fleſh, and none but immortals can learn the language of immortality. But why do I aſk of them? O thou Father of angels and of men, who *canſt perfect thy praiſe even out of the mouths of babes and ſucklings,* and who

who canſt open all the avenues of knowledge and pour thy glory upon created minds, do thou ſhine into my heart, to give me the light of the knowledge of thy glory: *I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory*; cauſe it to ſhine upon my underſtanding, while I try to diſplay it to thy people, that they may behold, adore, and love.

As to you, my brethren, I ſolicit your moſt ſolemn and reverential attention, while I would lead you into the knowledge of the Lord your Maker. One would think a kind of filial curioſity would inſpire you with eager deſires to be acquainted with your divine Parent and original. You would not be willing to worſhip you know not what, or, with the Athenians, adore an unknown God. Do you not long to know the greateſt and beſt of beings, the glimmerings of whoſe glory ſhine upon you from Heaven and earth? Would you not know him in whoſe preſence you hope to dwell and be happy for ever and ever? Come then, be all awe and attention, while I proclaim to you his name and perfections, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth; keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin.*

We may be ſure God has aſſumed to himſelf ſuch names as are beſt adapted to deſcribe his nature, as far as mortal language can reach. And every thing belonging to him is ſo dear and important, that his very name deſerves a particular conſideration. This is not to make empty criticiſms upon an arbitrary, unmeaning ſound, but to derive uſeful knowledge from a word of the greateſt emphaſis and ſignificancy.

The firſt name, in the order of the text, and in its own dignity, is, *the Lord*, or Jehovah; a name here twice repeated, to ſhew its importance, *the Lord, the Lord*, or Jehovah, Jehovah. This is a name peculiar to God, and incommunicable to the moſt exalted creature. The apoſtle tells us, *There are Gods many, and Lords many.* 1 Cor. viii. 5. Magiſtrates in particular are ſo called, becauſe their authority is ſome ſhadow of

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the divine authority. But the name Jehovah, which is rendered *Lord* in my text, and in all thoſe places in the Bible where it is written in capitals, I ſay, this name Jehovah is appropriated to the Supreme Being, and never applied to any other. He claims it to himſelf, as his peculiar glory. Thus in Pſalm lxxxiii. ver. 18. *Thou, whoſe name alone is Jehovah, art the Moſt High over all the earth.* And in Iſaiah xlii. ver. 8. *I am the Lord*, or (as it is in the original) *Jehovah*; that is my name, my proper incommunicable name, *and my glory will I not give to another*; that is, I will not allow another to ſhare with me in the glory of wearing this name. Thus alſo in Amos vi. ver. 13. *Lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, that declareth to man what is in his thoughts*, &c. *the Lord, the God of Hoſts, is his name*, his diſtinguiſhing, appropriated name. There muſt therefore be ſomething peculiarly ſacred and ſignificant in this name, ſince it is thus incommunicably appropriated to the only one God.

The Jews had ſuch a prodigious veneration for this name as amounted to a ſuperſtitious exceſs. They call it "That name," by way of diſtinction, "The great name, the glorious name, the appropriated name, the unutterable name, the expounded name,"* becauſe they never pronounced it, except in one inſtance, which I ſhall mention preſently, but always expounded it by ſome other: thus when the name Jehovah occurred in the Old Teſtament, they always read it *Adonai*, or *Elohim*, the uſual and leſs ſacred names, which we tranſlate *Lord God*. It was never pronounced by the Jews in reading, prayer, or the moſt ſolemn act of worſhip, much leſs in common converſation, except once a year, on the great day of atonement, and then only by the high prieſt in the ſanctuary, in pronouncing the benediction; but at all other times, places and occaſions, and to all other perſons, the pronunciation was

* They alſo diſtinguiſh it by the name of the four letters that compoſed it, *jodh, he, vau, he*; and hence the Greeks called it *the four-lettered Name*. See Buxtorf.

was deemed unlawful. The benediction was that which you read in *Numbers* vi. verſes 24, 25, 26. where the name Jehovah is thrice repeated in the Hebrew, *Jehovah bleſs thee, and keep thee: Jehovah make his face to ſhine upon thee, and be gracious to thee: Jehovah lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.* When this venerable name was pronounced upon this occaſion, we are told by the Jewiſh rabbies, "that all the vaſt congregation then preſent bowed the knee, and fell down in the humbleſt proſtration, crying out, *Bleſſed be his glorious name for ever and ever.* They ſuppoſed this name had a miraculous virtue in it, and that by it Moſes and others wrought ſuch wonders: nay, ſo great was their ſuperſtition, that they thought it a kind of charm or magical word, and that he that had it about him, and knew its true pronunciation and virtue, could perform the moſt ſurpriſing things, and even ſhake heaven and earth.*

I do not mention theſe things with approbation, but only to ſhew that there is ſomething peculiarly ſignificant, important, and ſacred in this name, from whence the Jews took occaſion for ſuch extravagant notions: and this will appear from its etymology. You know it is not my uſual method to carry a great quantity of learned diſquiſition with me into the pulpit, or to ſpend your time in trifling, pedantic criticiſms upon words, which may indeed have a ſhew of literature, and amuſe thoſe who admire what they do not underſtand, but can anſwer no valuable end in a popular audience. However, at preſent I muſt take the liberty of ſhewing you the original meaning of the name *Jehovah*, that I may thoroughly explain my text, and that you may know the import of a name that will occur

* This name ſeems not to have been unknown among other nations. Hence probably is derived the name *Jovis, Jove*, the Latin name for the ſupreme God. And it is probably in alluſion to this that Varro ſays, "Deum Judæorum eſſe Jovem." The Moors alſo call God *Jubah*, and the Mahometans *Hou*; which in their language ſignifies the ſame with Jehovah, namely, *He who is.* See Univ. Hiſt. Vol. III. p. 357, note 1.

occur ſo often to you in reading your bibles; for, as I told you, wherever you meet with the word *Lord* in large letters, it is always *Jehovah* in the original.

The name Jehovah is derived from the Hebrew verb, *to be*; and therefore the meaning of the word Jehovah is, *The exiſtent, the being*, or *He that is*. Thus it ſeems explained in Exodus iii. ver. 14. *I am that I am*, or, "I am becauſe I am;" that is, I exiſt, and have being in and of myſelf without dependence upon any cauſe; and my exiſtence or being is always the ſame, unchangeable and eternal. St. John well explains this name by the *Who is, who was, and who is to come*; or, as the paſſage might be rendered, "The preſent Being, the paſt Being, and the future Being;" or, The Being that is, the Being that was, and the Being that will be; that is, the perpetual, the eternal, and unchangeable Being. I ſhall only obſerve farther, that Jehovah is not a relative, but an abſolute name: there is no pronoun or relative word that is ever joined with it: we can ſay, My Lord, our Lord, our God, &c. but the Hebrews never ſay or write, My Jehovah, our Jehovah, &c. ſo that this name repreſents him as he is in himſelf, without any relation to his creatures, as he would have been if they had never exiſted. He would ſtill have been the Being, the abſolute, independent exiſtent, in which view he has nothing to do with his creatures, and can ſuſtain no relation to them.

From this name, thus explained, we learn the following glorious, incommunicable perfections of God; that he is ſelf-exiſtent and independent; that his being is neceſſary; that he is eternal; and that he is unchangeable.

While I am about to enter upon theſe ſubjects, I ſeem to ſtand upon the brink of an unbounded, fathomleſs ocean, and tremble to launch into it; but, under the conduct of ſcripture and humble reaſon, let us make the adventure; for it is an happineſs to be loſt and ſwallowed up in ſuch an ocean of perfection.

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I. The name Jehovah implies that God is *ſelf-exiſtent* and independent. I do not mean by this that he produced himſelf, for that would be a direct contradiction, and ſuppoſe him to exiſt, and not to exiſt at the ſame time: but I mean that the reaſon and ground of his exiſtence is in his own nature, and does not at all depend upon any thing beſides. Being is eſſential to him. He contains an infinite fulneſs of being in himſelf, and no other being has contributed in the leaſt towards his exiſtence; and hence with great propriety he aſſumes that ſtrange name, *I am*. He is Being throughout, perfectly and univerſally vital; and the reaſon of this is entirely within his own nature.

How glorious is he diſtinguiſhed in this reſpect from all other beings, even the moſt illuſtrious and powerful! Time was, when they were nothing. Angels and archangels, men and beaſts, ſun, moon, and ſtars; in ſhort, the whole univerſe beſides were once nothing, had no being at all: and what was the reaſon that they ever came into being? Certainly it was not in them: when they were nothing there was no reaſon at all in them why they ſhould ever be ſomething; for in not being, there can be no reaſon or ground for being. The mere pleaſure of God, the fiat of this ſelf-exiſting Jehovah, is the only reaſon and ſole cauſe of their exiſtence. If it had not been for him, they would have continued nothing as they were: their being therefore is entirely precarious, dependent, and wholly proceeds from a cauſe without themſelves. But Jehovah glories in an unborrowed, underived, independent being. Whatever he is, it is his own; he owes it only to himſelf. What a glorious Being is this! how infinitely different from and ſuperior to the whole ſyſtem of creatures! Are you not already conſtrained to bow the knee before him, and wonder, adore, and love? But,

II. Hence it follows that his exiſtence is neceſſary; that is, it is impoſſible for him not *to be*. His being does

does not depend upon any thing without him, nor does it depend upon his own arbitrary will, but it is eſſential to his nature. That he ſhould not be is as great an impoſſibility as that two and two ſhould not make four. It is impoſſible that any thing ſhould be more cloſely connected with any thing than being is with his eſſence, and it is impoſſible any thing ſhould be more oppoſite to any thing than he is to non-exiſtence. Since he received his being from nothing without himſelf, and ſince the reaſon of his exiſtence is not derived from any other, it follows, that unleſs he exiſts by the neceſſity of his own nature, he muſt exiſt without any neceſſity; that is, without any reaſon at all, which is the ſame as to ſay that nothing is the cauſe or ground of his exiſtence; and what imagination can be more abſurd? His being therefore muſt exiſt by an abſolute, independent neceſſity.

What a glorious Being is this! how infinitely diſtant from nothing, or a poſſibility of not being! What an unbounded fund of exiſtence, what an immenſe ocean of Being is here! Alas! what are we, what is the whole univerſe beſides in this compariſon? They *are nothing, leſs than nothing, and vanity.* Our being is not only derived but arbitrary, depending entirely upon the mere pleaſure of Jehovah. There was no neceſſity from our nature that we ſhould *be* at all; and now there is no neceſſity that we ſhould continue to *be.* If we exiſt, it is not owing to us. "He made us, and not we ourſelves;" and if we ſhall continue to be for ever, it is not owing to a fund of being within ourſelves, but to the ſame God who firſt formed us. It is but lately ſince we ſprung from nothing, and how near are we ſtill to the confines of nothing! We hang over the dreadful gulph of annihilation by a ſlender thread of being ſuſtained by the ſelf-originated Jehovah. Remove him, take away his agency, and univerſal nature ſinks into nothing at once. Take away the root, and the branches wither: dry up the fountain, and the ſtreams ceaſe. If any of you are

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ſuch fools as to wiſh in your hearts there were no God; you imprecate annihilation upon the whole univerſe; you wiſh total deſtruction to yourſelf and every thing elſe; you wiſh the extinction of all being. All depend upon God, the uncauſed cauſe, the only neceſſary Being. Suffer me here to make a digreſſion. Is this the God whom the daring ſons of men ſo much forget, diſhonour, and diſobey? Are they ſo entirely dependent upon him, and yet careleſs how they behave towards him, careleſs whether they love and pleaſe him? Do they owe their Being and their all entirely to him? And are they wholly in his hand? What then do they mean by withholding their thoughts and affections from him, breaking his laws and neglecting his goſpel? Can you find a name for ſuch a conduct? Would it not be entirely incredible did we not ſee it with our eyes all around us? Sinners, what mean you by this conduct? Let the infant rend the womb that conceived it, or tear the breaſts that cheriſh it; go, poiſon or deſtroy the bread that ſhould feed you; dry up the ſtreams that ſhould allay your thirſt; ſtop the breath that keeps you in life: do theſe things, or do any thing, but O! do not forget, diſobey, and provoke the very Father of your being, to whom you owe it that you are not as much nothing now as you were ten thouſand years ago, and on whom you depend, not only for this and that mercy, but for your very being, every moment of your exiſtence, in time and eternity. He can do very well without you, but O what are you without him! a ſtream without a fountain, a branch without a root, an effect without a cauſe, a mere blank, a nothing. He indeed is ſelf-ſufficient and ſelf-exiſtent. It is nothing to him, as to his exiſtence, whether creation exiſts or not. Let men and angels, and every creature ſink to nothing, from whence they came, his being is ſtill ſecure: he enjoys an unprecarious being of his own, neceſſarily, unchangeably, and eternally exiſtent. Men and angels bow the knee, fall proſtrate and adore before this Being of beings. How mean

are you in his preſence! what poor, arbitrary, dependent, periſhing creatures! what ſhadows of exiſtence! what mere nothings! And is it not fit you ſhould humbly acknowledge it? Can there be any thing more unnatural, any thing more fooliſh, any thing more audaciouſly wicked, than to neglect or contemn ſuch a Being, the Being of beings, the Being that includes all being? I can hardly bear up under the horror of the thought.

III. The name Jehovah implies that God is eternal; that is, he always was, is, and ever will be. *From everlaſting to everlaſting he is God.* Pſalm xc. 2. This is his grand peculiar, *he only hath immortality*, 2 Tim. vi. 16. in a full and abſolute ſenſe. Men and angels indeed are immortal, but it is but a kind of half-eternity they enjoy. They once were nothing, and continued in that ſtate through an eternal duration. But as Jehovah never will have an end, ſo he never had a beginning. This follows from his neceſſary ſelf-exiſtence. If the reaſon of his exiſtence be in himſelf, then unleſs he always exiſted he never could exiſt, for nothing without himſelf could cauſe him to exiſt. And if he exiſts by abſolute neceſſity, he muſt always exiſt, for abſolute neceſſity is always the ſame, without any relation to time or place. Therefore he always was, and ever will be.

And what a wonderful Being is this! a Being unbegun, and that can never have an end! a Being poſſeſſed of a complete, entire eternity. Here, my brethren, let your thoughts take wing, and fly backward and forward, and ſee if you can trace his exiſtence. Fly back in thought about ſix thouſand years, and all nature, as far as appears to us, was a mere blank; no heaven nor earth, no men nor angels. But ſtill the great Eternal lived, lived alone, ſelf-ſufficient and ſelf-happy. Fly forward in thought as far as the conflagration, and you will ſee *the heavens diſſolving, and the earth and the things that are therein burnt up:* but ſtill Jehovah lives unchangeable, and abſolutely independent.

dent. Exert all the powers of number, add centuries to centuries, thouſands to thouſands, millions to millions, fly back, back, back as far as thought can poſſibly carry you, ſtill Jehovah exiſts; nay, you are even then as far from the firſt moment of his exiſtence as you are now, or ever can be. Take the ſame proſpect before you, and you will find the King eternal and immortal ſtill the ſame: he is then no nearer an end than at the creation, or millions of ages before it.

What a glorious Being is this! Here again, let men and angels, and all the offspring of time bow the knee and adore. Let them loſe themſelves in this ocean, and ſpend their eternity in extatic admiration and love of this eternal Jehovah.

O! what a glorious portion is he to his people! Your earthly enjoyments may paſs away like a ſhadow; your friends die, yourſelves muſt die, and heaven and earth may vaniſh like a dream, but your God lives! he lives for ever, to give you an happineſs equal to your immortal duration. Therefore, *bleſſed, bleſſed is the people whoſe God is the Lord!*

But O! let ſinners, let wicked men and devils tremble before him, for how dreadful an enemy is an eternal God! He lives for ever to puniſh you. He lives for ever to hate your ſin, to reſent your rebellion, and to diſplay his juſtice; and while he lives you muſt be miſerable. What a diſmal ſituation are you in, when the eternal exiſtence of Jehovah is an inexhauſtible fund of terror to you! O how have you inverted the order of things, when you have made it your intereſt that the Fountain of being ſhould ceaſe to be, and that with him yourſelves and all other creatures ſhould vaniſh into nothing! What a malignant thing is ſin, that makes exiſtence a curſe, and univerſal annihilation a bleſſing! What a ſtrange region is hell, where being, ſo ſweet in itſelf, and the capacity of all enjoyments, is become the moſt intolerable burden, and every wiſh is an imprecation of univerſal annihilation! Sinners, you have now time to conſider theſe miſeries

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and avoid them, and will you be ſo ſenſeleſs and foolhardy as to ruſh headlong into them? O! if you were but ſenſible what will be the conſequences of your conduct in a few years, you would not need perſuaſions to reform it: but O the fatal blindneſs and ſtupidity of mortals, who will not be convinced of theſe things till the conviction be too late!

IV. The name Jehovah implies that God is unchangeable, or always the ſame. If he exiſts neceſſarily, he muſt always neceſſarily be what he is, and cannot be any thing elſe. He is dependent upon none, and therefore he can be ſubject to no change from another; and he is infinitely perfect, and therefore cannot deſire to change himſelf. So that he muſt be always the ſame through all duration, from eternity to eternity; the ſame not only as to his being, but as to his perfections; the ſame in power, wiſdom, goodneſs, juſtice, and happineſs. Thus he repreſents himſelf in his word, as *the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableneſs, nor ſhadow of turning*, James i. 17. *the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever.* Heb. xiii. 8.— What a diſtinguiſhing perfection is this! and indeed it is in Jehovah only that immutability can be a perfection. The moſt excellent creature is capable of progreſſive improvements, and ſeems intended for it; and to fix ſuch a creature at firſt in an immutable ſtate, would be to limit and reſtrain it from higher degrees of perfection, and keep it always in a ſtate of infancy. But Jehovah is abſolutely, completely, and infinitely perfect, at the higheſt ſummit of all poſſible excellency, infinitely beyond any addition to his perfection, and abſolutely incapable of improvement; and conſequently as there is no room for, ſo there is no need of a change in him; and his immutability is a perpetual, invariable continuance in the higheſt degree of excellency, and therefore the higheſt perfection. He is the cauſe and the ſpectator of an endleſs variety of changes in the univerſe, without the leaſt change in himſelf. He ſees worlds ſpringing into being, exiſting a while,

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and then diſſolving. He ſees kingdoms and empires forming, riſing, and ruſhing headlong to ruin. He changes the times and the ſeaſons; *removeth kings, and he ſetteth up kings*, Dan. ii. 21. and he ſees the ficklenes and viciſſitudes of mortals; he ſees generations upon generations vaniſhing like ſucceſſive ſhadows; he ſees them now wiſe, now fooliſh; now in purſuit of one thing, now of another; now happy, now miſerable, and in a thouſand different forms. He ſees the revolutions in nature, the ſucceſſions of the ſeaſons, and of night and day. Theſe and a thouſand other alterations he beholds, and they are all produced or permitted by his all-ruling Providence; but all theſe make no change in him; his being, his perfections, his counſels, and his happineſs are invariably and eternally the ſame. He is not wiſe, good, juſt, or happy only at times, but he is equally, ſteadily, and immutably ſo through the whole of his infinite duration. O how unlike the fleeting offspring of time, and eſpecially the changing race of man!

Since Jehovah is thus conſtant and unchangeable, how worthy is he to be choſen as our beſt friend! You that love him need fear no change in him. They are not ſmall matters that will turn his heart from you: his love is fixed with judgment, and he never will ſee reaſon to reverſe it: it is not a tranſient fit of fondneſs, but it is deliberate, calm, and ſteady. You may ſafely truſt your all in his hands, for he cannot deceive you; and whatever or whoever fail you, he will not. You live in a fickle, uncertain world; your beſt friends may prove treacherous or cool towards you; all your earthly comforts may wither and die around you; yea, heaven and earth may paſs away; but your God is ſtill the ſame. He has aſſured you of it with his own mouth, and pointed out to you the happy conſequence of it, *I am the Lord Jehovah*, ſays he, *I change not; therefore ye ſons of Jacob are not conſumed.* Mal. iii. 6.

What a complete happineſs is this Jehovah to thoſe who have choſen him for their portion! If an infinite

God

God is now ſufficient to ſatisfy your utmoſt deſires, he will be ſo to all eternity. He is an ocean of communicative happineſs that never ebbs or flows, and therefore completely bleſſed will you ever be who have an intereſt in him.

But O! how miſerable are they who are the enemies of this Jehovah! Sinners, he is unchangeable, and can never lay aſide his reſentments againſt ſin, or abate in the leaſt degree in his love of virtue and holineſs. He will never recede from his purpoſe to puniſh impenitent rebels, nor looſe his power to accompliſh it. His hatred of all moral evil is not a tranſient paſſion, but a fixed, invariable, deep-rooted hatred. Therefore, if ever you be happy, there muſt be a change in you. As you are ſo oppoſite to him, there muſt be an alteration in the one or the other: you ſee it cannot be in him, and therefore it muſt be in you; and this you ought to labour for above all other things. Let us then have grace, *whereby we may ſerve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a conſuming fire* (Heb. xii. 28, 29.) to his impenitent and implacable enemies.*

* Our author has evidently not finiſhed his ſubject, and I do not find it proſecuted in any of the diſcourſes that are come to my hands; but yet I determined to publiſh the Sermon, not only for its own (if I miſtake not) ſubſtantial worth, but the rather as the Sermon that next follows in order may be conſidered as a proſecution, if not a completion of the great and glorious ſubject he has undertaken, particularly of his profeſſed deſign in this Sermon, "of explaining the ſeveral perfections here aſcribed to God, and ſhewing that they all concur to conſtitute his goodneſs."

The Editor.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

God is Love.

1 JOHN iv. 8. *God is Love.*

LOVE is a gentle, pleaſing theme, the nobleſt paſſion of the human breaſt, and the faireſt ornament of the rational nature. Love is the cement of ſociety, and the ſource of ſocial happineſs; and without it the great community of the rational univerſe would diſſolve, and men and angels would turn ſavages, and roam apart in barbarous ſolitude. Love is the ſpring of every pleaſure; for who could take pleaſure in the poſſeſſion of what he does not love! Love is the foundation of religion and morality; for what is more monſtrous than religion without love to that God who is the object of it! Or who can perform ſocial duties without feeling the endearments of thoſe relations to which they belong! Love is the ſoftener and poliſher of human minds, and transforms barbarians into men: its pleaſures are refined and delicate, and even its pains and anxieties have ſomething in them ſoothing and pleaſing. In a word, love is the brighteſt beam of divinity that has ever irradiated the creation; the neareſt reſemblance to the ever-bleſſed God; for *God is Love.*

God is love. There is an unfathomable depth in this conciſe laconic ſentence, which even the penetration of an angel's mind cannot reach; an ineffable excellence, which even celeſtial eloquence cannot fully repreſent. *God is love*; not only lovely and loving, but love itſelf; pure, unmixed love, nothing but love; love in his nature and in his operations; the object, ſource, and quinteſſence of all love.

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My preſent deſign is to recommend the Deity to your affections under the amiable idea of Love, and for that end to ſhew that his other perfections are but various modifications of love.

I. Love comprehends the various forms of divine beneficence. Goodneſs, that extends its bounties to innumerable ranks of creatures, and diffuſes happineſs through the various regions of the univerſe, except that which is ſet apart for the dreadful, but ſalutary and benevolent purpoſe of confining and puniſhing incorrigible malefactors; Grace, which ſo richly ſhowers its bleſſings upon the undeſerving, without paſt merit of the proſpect of future compenſation; Mercy, that commiſerates and relieves the miſerable as well as the undeſerving; Patience and Long-ſuffering, which ſo long tolerate inſolent and provoking offenders; what is all this beneficence in all theſe its different forms towards different objects, what but Love under various names? It is gracious, merciful, patient and long-ſuffering love! love variegated, overflowing, and unbounded! what but love was the Creator of ſuch a world as this, ſo well accommodated, ſo richly furniſhed for the ſuſtenance and comfort of its inhabitants? and what but love has planted it ſo thick with an endleſs variety of beings, all capable of receiving ſome ſtream of happineſs from that immenſe fountain of it, the divine goodneſs? Is it not love that preſerves ſuch an huge unwieldy world as this in order and harmony from age to age, and ſupplies all its numerous inhabitants with every good? and O! was it not love, free, rich, unmerited love, that provided a Saviour for the guilty children of men? It was becauſe *God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life!* John iii. 16. O love! what haſt thou done! what wonders haſt thou wrought! It was thou, almighty love, that broughteſt down the Lord of glory from his celeſtial throne to die upon a croſs an atoning ſacrifice for the ſins of the world. And what but love

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is it that peoples the heavenly world with colonies tranſplanted from this rebellious province of Jehovah's dominions; that forms ſuch miracles of glory and happineſs out of the duſt, and the ſhattered polluted fragments of human nature! and what but eternal love perpetuates their bliſs through an eternal duration? but it is ſo evident, that theſe inſtances of divine goodneſs are only the effects of love, that it is needleſs to attempt any farther illuſtration.

II. What is divine wiſdom but a modification of divine love, planning the beſt adapted ſchemes for communicating itſelf in the moſt advantageous, beneficient, and honourable manner, ſo as to promote the good of the great whole or collective ſyſtem of creatures by the happineſs of individuals; or to render the puniſhment and miſery of individuals, which for important reaſons of ſtate may be ſometimes neceſſary in a good government, ſubſervient to the ſame benevolent end? Whatever traces of divine **wiſdom** we ſee in creation; as the order and harmony **of** the great ſyſtem of nature, its rich and various furniture, and the conſpiracy of all its parts to produce the good of each other and the whole; whatever divine wiſdom appears in conducting the great ſcheme of Providence through the various ages of time; or in the more aſtoniſhing and godlike work of redemption: in a word, whatever diſplays of divine wiſdom appear in any part of the univerſe, they are only the ſignatures of divine love. Why was yonder ſun fixed where he is, and enriched with ſuch extenſive vital influences, but becauſe divine love ſaw it was beſt and moſt conducive to the good of the ſyſtem? Why were our bodies ſo wonderfully and fearfully made, and all their parts ſo well fitted for action and enjoyment, but becauſe divine love drew the plan, and ſtamped its own amiable image upon them? Why was the manifold wiſdom of God diſplayed, not only to mortals, but alſo to angelic *principalities and powers*, Epheſ. iii. 10. in the ſcheme of redemption, which advances at once the honours

of the divine perfections and government, and the happineſs of rebellious and ruined creatures, by an expedient which nothing but infinite wiſdom could ever deviſe the incarnation, the obedience, and paſſion of the co-equal ſon of God? Why, I ſay, but becauſe divine love would otherwiſe be under reſtraint, and incapable of giving full ſcope to its kind propenſions in a manner honourable to itſelf and conducive to the public good? In ſhort, divine wiſdom appears to be nothing elſe but the ſagacity of love, to diſcover ways and means to exerciſe itſelf to the greateſt advantage; or, which is the ſame, divine wiſdom always acts under the benign determination and conduct of love: it is the counſellor of love to project ſchemes ſubſervient to its gracious purpoſes; and in all its councils love preſides.

III. What is divine power but the omnipotence of love? Why did omnipotence exert itſelf in the production of this vaſt amazing world out of nothing? It was to open a channel in which the overflowing ocean of love might extend itſelf, and diffuſe its ſtreams from creature to creature, upwards as high as the moſt exalted archangel, and downwards as low as the meaneſt vital particle of being, and extenſive as the remoteſt limits of the univerſe, and all the innumerable intermediate ranks of exiſtences in the endleſs chain of nature. And why does divine power ſtill ſupport this prodigious frame, but to keep the channel of love open from age to age? and for this purpoſe it will be exerted to all eternity. Perhaps I ſhould aſſiſt your ideas of Divine Power, if I ſhould call it the acting hand, the inſtrument, the ſervant of love, to perform its orders, and execute its gracious deſigns.

IV. What is the holineſs of God but love? Pure, refined, and honourable love. What is it but the love of excellence, rectitude, and moral goodneſs? Holineſs, in its own nature, has a tendency to promote the happineſs of the univerſe: it is the health, the good conſtitution of a reaſonable being; without which it has no

no capacity of reliſhing thoſe enjoyments which are ſuitable to its nature. It is no arbitrary mandate of heaven that has eſtabliſhed the inſeperable connection between holineſs and happineſs, between vice and miſery. The connection is as neceſſary, as immutable, and as much founded in the nature of things, as that between health of body and a capacity of animal enjoyments, or between ſickneſs and a diſreliſh for the moſt agreeable food. Every creature in the univerſe, as far as he is holy is happy; and as far as he is unholy he is miſerable. Therefore, by how much the more holy Jehovah is, by ſo much the more fit he is to communicate happineſs to all that enjoy him; and conſequently he is an infinite happineſs, for he is infinitely holy. His taking ſo much care to promote holineſs is but taking care of the public good. The ſtrict exactions of his law, which contains every ingredient of the moſt perfect holineſs, and admits of no diſpenſation, are but ſtrict injunctions to his ſubjects to purſue that courſe which infallibly leads them to the moſt conſummate happineſs; and every abatement in his demands of obedience would be a licence to them to deduct ſo much from their happineſs, and render themſelves ſo far miſerable with his conſent. That mitigation of the rigor of his law, which ſome imagine he has made to bring it down to a level with the abilities of degenerate creatures, diſabled by their voluntary wickedneſs, would no more contribute to their felicity than the allowing a ſick man to gratify his vitiated taſte by mixing a little deadly poiſon in his food would contribute to the recovery of his health, or the preſervation of his life. The penal ſanctions of the divine law are but friendly warnings againſt danger and miſery, and honeſt admonitions of the deſtructive conſequences of ſin, according to the unchangeable nature of things; they are threatenings which diſcover no malignity or ill-nature, as ſinners are apt to imagine, but the infinite benevolence of the heart of God: threatenings which are not primarily and unconditionally intended to be

executed,

executed, but to prevent all occaſion of their being executed, by preventing ſin, the natural ſource, as well as the meritorious cauſe of every miſery: threatenings which are not executed, but as the only expedient left in a deſperate caſe, when all other means have been uſed in vain, and no other method can ſecure the public good, or render a worthleſs criminal *a veſſel of wrath fitted for deſtruction*, and fit for nothing elſe; of no other ſervice to the great community of rational beings. Theſe are ſome of the ingredients and diſplays of the holineſs of God: and what are theſe but ſo many exertions of pure love and benevolence? It is becauſe he loves his creatures ſo much that he requires them to be ſo holy; and that very thing, againſt which there are ſo many cavils and objections, as too ſevere and oppreſſive, and a rigid reſtraint from the purſuit of pleaſure, is the higheſt inſtance of the love of God for them, and his regard for their happineſs.

Let me therefore commence advocate for God with my fellow-men, though it ſtrikes me with horror to think there ſhould be any occaſion for it. Ye children of the moſt tender Father, ye ſubjects of the moſt gracious and righteous Sovereign, ye beneficiaries of divine love, why do you harbour hard thoughts of him? Is it becauſe his laws are ſo ſtrict, and tolerate you in no guilty pleaſure? This appointment is the kind reſtraint of love: the love of ſo good a being will not allow him to diſpenſe with your obſervance of any thing that may contribute to your improvement and advantage, nor indulge you in any thing that is in its own nature deadly and deſtructive, no more than a father will ſuffer a favourite child to play with a viper, or a good government permit a madman to run at large armed with weapons to deſtroy himſelf and others. Do you think hard of God becauſe he hates all moral evil to ſuch a degree, that he has annexed to it everlaſting miſery of the moſt exquiſite kind? But what is this but an expreſſion of his infinite hatred to every thing that is hurtful to his creatures, and his infinite regard

regard to whatever tends to their benefit? Or has he been too rigid in exacting holineſs as a neceſſary prerequiſite to the happineſs of heaven? You may as well complain of the conſtitution of nature, that renders abſtinence from poiſon neceſſary to the preſervation of health, or that does not allow you to quench your thirſt in a fever with cold water. Let me remind you once more, that holineſs is eſſential to the happineſs of heaven, and that without it you labour under a moral incapacity of enjoyment; and a moral incapacity will as inevitably deprive you of the pleaſures of enjoyment as if it were natural. While unholy, you can no more be happy even in the region of happineſs than a ſtone can enjoy the pleaſures of animal life, or a mere animal thoſe of reaſon. "But why," you will perhaps murmur and object, "why has God formed ſuch an heaven as cannot be univerſally enjoyed? Why has he not provided an happineſs for every taſte?" You may as well aſk why he has not created a light that would be equally agreeable to every eye; to the mole and the owl, as well as to man and the eagle? Or why has he not formed light with all the properties of darkneſs; that is, why has he not performed contradictions? You may as well query, why has he not given us equal capacities of enjoyment in ſickneſs and in health, and furniſhed us with equal pleaſures in both? I tell you that, in the nature of things, the low and impure pleaſures which would ſuit the depraved taſte of the wicked, would be nauſeous and painful to pure minds refined and ſanctified; and they cannot mingle, they cannot approach each other without being deſtroyed. The element of water may as well be converted into a fit reſidence for the inhabitants of dry land, and yet retain all its properties that are ſuitable to its preſent natives; or the ſolid earth become a fit receptacle for fiſhes, and yet both it and the fiſhes retain their uſual qualities. In ſhort, men, beaſts, birds, fiſhes, inſects, angels, devils, the inhabitants of every zone and climate, of every planet, or any other region of

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the univerſe, may as well form one ſociety in one and the ſame place, and mingle their reſpective food and pleaſures, as an heaven of happineſs be prepared that would ſuit every taſte. God has prepared the only kind of heaven that is in its own nature poſſible; the only one that would be an expreſſion of love, or afford real and extenſive happineſs to ſuch of his creatures as are capable of it. The heaven of ſinners would be a nuiſance to all other beings in the univerſe; a private good only to malefactors, at the expence of the public; an open reward of wickedneſs, and a public diſcountenancing of all moral goodneſs. This would be the caſe upon the ſuppoſition that the heaven of ſinners were poſſible. But the ſuppoſition is infinitely abſurd; it is as impoſſible as the pleaſures of ſickneſs, the ſenſibility of a ſtone, or the meridian ſplendors of midnight.

Therefore acknowledge, admire, and love the beauty of the Lord, his holineſs. *Give thanks*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *at the remembrance of his holineſs*, Pſalm xcvii. 12. of his holineſs, as well as of his goodneſs and love; for it is the brighteſt modification of his love and goodneſs. An unholy being, in the character of ſupreme magiſtrate of the univerſe, cannot be all love, or communicate nothing but what is pleaſing to all; nay, as far as he is unholy he muſt have a malignant diſpoſition towards the public happineſs, and be eſſentially deficient in benevolence.

V. What is the juſtice, even the punitive juſtice of God, but a modification of love and goodneſs!

As there is no divine perfection which appears ſo terrible to offenders as this, which therefore they toil and ſweat to diſapprove or explain away, I ſhall dwell the longer upon it. And I hope to convince you that juſtice is not that grim, ſtern, tremendous attribute which is delineated by the guilty partial imagination of ſinners, who have made it their intereſt that there ſhould be no ſuch attribute in Deity, but that it is infinite amiable and lovely, as well as awful and majeſtic; nay, that it is love and benevolence itſelf. By

By the punitive juſtice of God, I mean that perfection of his nature which executes the ſentence of his law upon offenders, or inflicts upon them the puniſhment he had threatened to diſobedience, exactly according to his own denunciation. The preſent world, which is a ſtate of trial and diſcipline, and not of final rewards and puniſhments, is not the proper theatre of vindictive juſtice, but of a promiſcuous providence; *All things come alike to all*, and no man can know the love or hatred of the Ruler of the world towards him, *by all that is before him.* Eccleſ. ix. 1, 2. Yet ſometimes, even in this life, juſtice arreſts the guilty, and diſplays its illuſtrious terrors upon them, eſpecially upon guilty nations that have no exiſtence in a national capacity in the eternal world, and therefore can be puniſhed in that capacity in this only. It was vindictive juſtice that deluged the whole world in a flood of vengeance! that kindled the flames of Sodom and Gomorrah; and that cut off the nations of Canaan when they *had filled up the meaſure of their iniquities.* It is juſtice that arms kingdoms from age to age, and makes them the executioners of divine wrath upon one another, while they are gratifying their own ambition, avarice, or revenge. The devaſtations of earthquakes, inundations, plagues, epidemical ſickneſſes, famines, and the various calamities in which mankind have been involved, are ſo many diſplays of divine juſtice; and their being brought on the world according to the courſe of nature, and by means of ſecondary cauſes, will by no means prove that they are not ſo, but only that the very make and conſtitution of this world are ſo planned and formed by divine wiſdom as to admit of the execution of juſtice at proper periods, and that all its parts are the inſtruments of juſtice to accompliſh its deſigns. But theſe and all the other judgments of Heaven upon our world are only preludes and ſpecimens of the moſt perfect adminiſtration of it in a future ſtate. There the penalty of the law will be executed upon impenitent offenders with the utmoſt im-

partiality.

partiality. And Revelation aſſures us that the puniſhment will be endleſs in duration, and of as exquiſite a kind and high degree as the utmoſt capacity of the ſubjects will admit; and conſequently that it will not, like fatherly chaſtiſements, have any tendency to their reformation or advantage, but to their entire and everlaſting deſtruction. Now it is this diſplay of punitive juſtice that appears ſo terrible and cruel to the guilty children of men; and therefore this is what I ſhall principally endeavour to vindicate and to clothe with all the gentle and amiable glories of Love and public Benevolence.

For this end I beg you would conſider, that whatever has a tendency to prevent ſin tends to prevent miſery alſo, and to promote the happineſs of the world and of all the individuals in it; that good laws are abſolutely neceſſary for the prevention of ſin; that penal ſanctions are eſſential to good laws; and that the execution of the penal ſanctions upon offenders is abſolutely neceſſary to their efficacy and good tendency; and conſequently the execution of them is a *diſplay* of love and benevolence.

Conſider alſo, that many are excited to ſeek everlaſting happineſs, and deterred from the ways that lead down to deſtruction, by means of the threatenings of the law; that even thoſe on whom they are finally executed were once in a capacity of receiving immortal advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency by their own wilful obſtinacy: and that the righteous execution of theſe threatenings upon the incorrigible, may promote the common good of the univerſe.

Conſider farther, that criminals are incompetent judges of vindictive juſtice, becauſe they are parties; and therefore we ſhould not form an eſtimate of it by their prejudices, but from the judgment of the diſintereſted and impartial part of the creation.

Finally conſider, that proceedings ſimilar to thoſe of the divine government, are not only approved of as juſt

juſt in all human governments, but alſo loved and admired as amiable and praiſeworthy, and eſſential to the goodneſs and benevolence of a ruler.

Let us briefly illuſtrate theſe ſeveral claſſes of propoſitions.

I. "Whatever has a tendency to prevent ſin, tends to prevent miſery alſo, and to promote the happineſs of the univerſe and of all the individuals in it: good laws are abſolutely neceſſary for the prevention of ſin: penal ſanctions are eſſential to good laws; and the ſeaſonable execution of thoſe ſanctions is abſolutely neceſſary to their efficacy and good tendency; and conſequently the execution of them is a diſplay of love and benevolence."

"Whatever has a tendency to prevent ſin, tends to prevent miſery alſo," and that for this reaſon, becauſe ſin is neceſſarily productive of miſery, and deſtructive of happineſs. Can a rational creature be happy that is diſaffected to the ſupreme good, the only ſource of that kind of happineſs which is adapted to a rational nature? This is as impoſſible as that you ſhould enjoy animal pleaſures while you abhor all animal enjoyments. Can a ſocial creature be happy in eternal ſolitude, or in a ſtate of ſociety, while ill-affected towards the other members of ſociety, or while they are ill-affected towards him and he to them, *hateful, and hating one another?* Can a creature, formed capable of felicity ſuperior to what any good can communicate, be happy in the eager purſuit of bubbles; that is, of its higheſt happineſs in inferior enjoyments? All thoſe diſpoſitions of heart, and the practices reſulting from them, in which ſin conſiſts, enmity to God, uneaſy murmurings and inſurrections againſt his perfections, and the government of his law and Providence; a churliſh, malignant, envious temper towards mankind; an anxious, exceſſive eagerneſs of deſire after vain, unſatisfactory enjoyments; a diſreliſh for the exalted pleaſures of holineſs and benevolence; what are theſe and the like diſpoſitions, but ſo many ingredients of

miſery, and ſo many abatements of happineſs? and conſequently all meaſures that are taken for the prevention of ſin are ſo many benevolent expedients for the prevention of miſery and the increaſe of happineſs.

I add, "Good laws are abſolutely neceſſary for the prevention of ſin." Indeed thoſe diſpoſitions and actions which are ſinful and forbidden by the divine law would be of a deadly nature to the ſoul even if they were not forbidden, as a ſtab to the heart would prove mortal to the body, although there were no laws againſt it, and for that very reaſon laws have been made againſt it. Therefore the laws of God do not properly conſtitute the deſtructive nature of ſin, but only point out and warn us againſt what is deſtructive in its own nature previous to all explicit law. And is it not abſolutely neceſſary, and an act of the higheſt benevolence, that the ſupreme Lawgiver ſhould warn us againſt this pernicious evil, and plainly inform us what it is? This is the deſign of his laws both natural and revealed. And without them, what ſure inſtructor, what unerring guide, or what ſtrong inducements to a proper conduct could we have in this moſt important caſe? Is it not neceſſary, is it not kind, that the ſupreme Legiſlator ſhould interpoſe his authority, and lay us under the ſtrongeſt obligation to avoid our own ruin? And if good laws are neceſſary, ſo are penal ſanctions; for, "penal ſanctions are eſſential to good laws." Laws without penalties would be only the advices of an equal or an inferior, and not the obligatory commands of authority. They might be obſerved or not, according to pleaſure, and conſequently would anſwer no valuable purpoſe. They woud alſo be infinitely abſurd in their own nature; for if what the law enjoins be reaſonable, neceſſary, and of good tendency, is it not neceſſary and fit that they who do not deſerve it ſhould feel the bad effects of their omiſſion? And what is this but a penalty? But on a point ſo plain I need not multiply words; I appeal to the common ſenſe of mankind, I appeal

to

to the univerſal practice of all governments. Have there ever been, or can there poſſibly be any laws without penal ſanctions? would not ſuch laws be expoſed to perpetual inſult and contempt, and be deſtitute of all force and energy? The common ſenſe and univerſal practice of all the world, in all ages, remonſtrate againſt ſuch an abſurdity. But if penal ſanctions are eſſential to good laws, then ſo is their execution; for,

"The ſeaſonable execution of penal ſanctions is abſolutely neceſſary to their efficacy and good tendency." Penalties denounced can have no efficacy upon the ſubjects of the law; that is, they cannot excite fear, and by that means deter them from diſobedience, unleſs they are believed, and their execution expected. But they would ſoon ceaſe to be believed, and their execution would no longer be expected, if in ſeveral inſtances they ſhould be diſpenſed with, and a ſucceſſion of ſinners ſhould paſs with impunity. Other ſinners, judging of future events by paſt facts, would expect the ſame indulgence, and therefore venture upon diſobedience without any reſtraint from the penalty of the law. Here again I ſhall bring the matter to a quick deciſion, by appealing to the common reaſon and univerſal practice of mankind. Would human laws have any force if the penalty was hung up as an empty terror and never executed? Would not ſuch laws be liable to perpetual violation and inſult, and become the ſport of daring offenders? Would not the eſcapes of former offenders encourage all future generations to give themſelves a-looſe, in hopes of the ſame exemption? Is it not neceſſary in all governments that public juſtice ſhould make examples of ſome, to warn and deter others? Have not all nations, eſpecially the more civilized, made ſuch examples? And have not all the impartial world commended their proceedings as neceſſary to the ſafety and happineſs of ſociety, and expreſſive of their regard to the public good?

View all theſe things together, and methinks I may

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bid defiance to common ſenſe to draw any other concluſion than that the juſtice of God in executing the penalties of his law upon impenitent offenders, is the height of goodneſs and love. If love requires that all proper expedients be uſed for the prevention of ſin; if good laws are neceſſary for this end; if penalties are eſſential to good laws; and if the ſeaſonable execution of penalties be abſolutely neceſſary to give them their benevolent force and good tendency, does it not unavoidably follow, that love itſelf requires both the enacting of penal ſanctions to the law of God, and the execution of them upon proper ſubjects? Without this wholeſome ſeverity, the divine laws would be leſs ſecure from contempt, and the divine government would be leſs favourable to the peace and happineſs of the ſubjects than the laws and governments of mortals in all civilized nations.

"But why does the penalty riſe ſo high? Why is the execution lengthened out through everlaſting ages? Why might not a gentler puniſhment ſuffice?" This is the grand objection; and in ſuch language as this the enmity of the rebellious heart againſt the juſtice of God generally expreſſes itſelf. But if the original deſign and natural tendency of the threatened penalty be to prevent ſin, then by how much ſeverer the penalty, by ſo much the more effectual tendency has it to anſwer this kind deſign? No puniſhments can riſe higher than thoſe which a righteous God has annexed to diſobedience, the natural ſource of every miſery; and what is this but to ſay that no methods more effectual can be taken to prevent it than what he has actually taken? We may therefore infer the ardor of the love of God from the terror of his threatenings. He has denounced the greateſt miſery againſt ſin, in order to reſtrain his creatures from running into that very miſery; and threatens the loſs of heaven, in order to prevent his creatures from loſing it.

I muſt alſo here repeat the common argument, which appears to me as valid as common; "that as the

the eſſence of ſin conſiſts in the breach of an obligation, the evil of ſin muſt be exactly proportioned to the ſtrength of the obligation;" that as we are undoubtedly under infinite obligations to a God of infinite excellency, our Maker, Ruler, and Benefactor, the evil of ſin, which violates thoſe obligations, muſt be infinite alſo; and that no puniſhment ſhort of what is infinite can be adequate to the demerit of an infinite evil; and conſequently ſinners ought to ſuffer a finite puniſhment through an infinite duration, becauſe that is the only way in which they are able to bear an infinite puniſhment. But on this common topic a few hints may ſuffice.

I proceed to the next ſet of propoſitions.

II. "That many are excited to the purſuit of everlaſting happineſs, and deterred from the ways of deſtruction, by means of threatenings of the divine law; that even thoſe unhappy creatures on whom they are finally executed were once in a capacity of receiving immortal advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency by their own wilful obſtinacy; and that the righteous execution of theſe threatenings upon the incorrigible may promote the common good of the univerſe."

"Many are excited to the purſuit of everlaſting happineſs, and deterred from the ways of deſtruction, by means of the threatenings of the divine law." I appeal to experience and obſervation, whether the terrors of the Lord are not the very firſt thing that gives a check to ſinners in their headlong career to ruin? It is *the law* that *worketh wrath*, Rom. iv. 15. that is, an alarming apprehenſion of the wrath of God againſt ſin, and conſtrains them to uſe the inſtituted means of deliverance. Thus even the terrors of the law are made ſubſervient to divine love, in *turning ſinners from the error of their way, and ſaving ſouls from death.* And could we conſult the glorious aſſembly of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, they would all own that if their heavenly Father had not threatened them ſo ſeverely,

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they would always have continued undutiful, and conſequently rendered themſelves miſerable; and that they were ſaved from hell by being honeſtly warned of the danger of falling into it. It is true there are multitudes who do not receive this advantage by the penal ſanctions of the divine law, but are made miſerable for ever by the execution of them; yet it may be added,

"That even thoſe unhappy creatures on whom they are executed, were once in a capacity of receiving infinite advantage from them, but defeated their good influence and tendency in their own wilful obſtinacy." The threatenings of the divine law had the ſame good tendency in their own nature with reſpect to them, to deter them from diſobedience and urge their purſuit of happineſs, as with reſpect to others; and theſe were ſome of the means God appointed for their ſalvation. But they hardened themſelves againſt them, and thus defeated their good tendency, and obſtinately ruined themſelves in defiance of warning: they even forced a paſſage into the infernal pit through the ſtrongeſt encloſures. But if they had not been thus warned, they not only would not have been ſaved in the event, but they would not have enjoyed the means of ſalvation. Now their enjoying theſe means was in itſelf an inexpreſſible bleſſing, though in the iſſue it only aggravates their miſery; and conſequently the enacting thoſe penalties to the divine law was really an act of kindneſs even to them; and their abuſe of the bleſſing does not alter its nature. The primary and direct end of a penalty is not the puniſhment of the ſubjects, but to reſtrain them from things injurious to themſelves and others, and urge them to purſue their own intereſt. But when this good end is not anſwered, by reaſon of their wilful folly and diſobedience, then, and not till then, the execution is neceſſary for the good of others;* which leads me to add,

"That

* Penalties operate, like final cauſes, by a kind of retroſpective influence; that is, whilſt they are only threatened, and the ſubject expects they will be executed, ſhould he turn diſobedient, they have

"That the righteous execution of the threatened penalty upon the incorrigible may promote the common good of the univerſe." This world of ours is a public theatre, ſurrounded with numerous ſpectators, who are intereſted in its affairs. Angels in particular, are witneſſes of the proceedings of Providence towards mankind, and thence learn the perfections of God, and the maxims of his government. Hell is alſo a region dreadfully conſpicuous to them; and there, no doubt, the offended Judge intends to ſhew his wrath, and make his power known to them as well as to mankind. Now they are held in obedience by rational motives, and not by any mechanical compulſion. And, among other motives of a gentler kind, no doubt this is one of no ſmall weight; namely, their obſerving the deſtructive conſequences of ſin upon men and angels, and the terrible diſpleaſure of God againſt it. It is not at all inconſiſtent with their dignity and purity to ſuppoſe them ſwayed by this motive in a proper connection with others of a more diſintereſted and generous nature. Therefore the confirmation of the elect angels in holineſs, and their everlaſting happineſs, is no doubt not a little ſecured and promoted by the execution of righteous puniſhment upon ſome notorious hardened malefactors, both of their own order and of the human race.

The ſame thing may be ſaid of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*; they are happily incapable of ſinning, and conſequently of becoming miſerable; but their incapacity ariſes from the clear conviction of their underſtanding, which has the conduct of their will; and, while

a powerful tendency to deter him from diſobedience. But they could not have this benevolent tendency, unleſs they be executed upon thoſe, on whom their primary and chief deſign is not obtained; namely, the reſtraining of them from ſin. It is enough that the offenders themſelves once had an opportunity of taking warning, and reaping the advantage of the threatened penalty, while they were in a ſtate of trial, and candidates for eternity. But it is abſurd that they ſhould receive any benefit from it, when, after ſufficient trial, it appears they will take no warning, but are reſolved to perſiſt in ſin, in defiance of the moſt tremendous penalties.

while ſin appears to them ſo deadly and deſtructive an evil, it is impoſſible, according to the make of a rational nature, that they ſhould chooſe it. But the conſequences of ſin upon the wretched creatures on whom the penalty denounced againſt it is executed, is no doubt one thing that affords them this conviction; and ſo it contributes to their perſeverance in obedience and happineſs. Thus the joys of heaven are ſecured by the pains of hell, and even the moſt noxious criminals, the enemies of God and his creatures, are not uſeleſs in the univerſe, but anſwer the terrible but benevolent end of warning all other creatures againſt diſobedience; which would involve them in the ſame miſery, juſt as the execution of a few malefactors in human governments is of extenſive ſervice to the reſt of the ſubjects.

But as the greater part of mankind periſh, it may be queried, "How is it conſiſtent with love and goodneſs, that the majority ſhould be puniſhed and made monuments of juſtice, for the benefit of the ſmaller number?" To this I reply, that though it be equally evident from ſcripture and obſervation, that the greater part of mankind go down to deſtruction in the ſmooth, broad, deſcending road of ſin, in the ordinary ages of the world; and though revelation aſſures us that the number of the apoſtate angels is very great, yet I think we have no reaſon to conclude that the greater part of the rational creation ſhall be miſerable; nay, it is poſſible the number of thoſe on whom the penalty of the divine law is inflicted, may bear no more proportion to that of the innumerable ranks of creatures that may be retained in obedience and happineſs by means of their conſpicuous and exemplary puniſhment, than the number of criminals executed in our government for the warning of others bears to the reſt of the ſubjects. If we conſider that thoſe who have been *redeemed from the earth*, even in the ordinary ages of the world, though comparatively but few, yet abſolutely are a *multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred,*

dred, and people, and language, Rev. viii. 9. and that the elect angels are *an innumerable company,** Heb. xii. 22. perhaps much greater than the legions of hell; if to theſe we add the prodigious numbers that ſhall be converted in that long and bleſſed ſeaſon when Satan ſhall be bound, when the Prince of Peace ſhall reign, and when *the kingdom and dominion, and the greatneſs of the kingdom under the whole heaven ſhall be given to the people of the ſaints of the moſt high,* Dan. vii. 27. in which not only the greater number of the generations that ſhall live in that glorious millennium ſhall be ſaved, but perhaps a greater number than all that periſhed in former generations, which is very probable if we conſider the long continuance of that time, and that the world will then be under the peculiar bleſſing of Heaven, and conſequently mankind will multiply faſter, and not be diminiſhed as they now are by the calamities of war, plagues, epidemical ſickneſſes, and the other judgments of God upon thoſe times of rebellion; if we alſo borrow a little light from the hypotheſis of philoſophy, and ſuppoſe that the other planets of our ſyſtem are peopled like our earth with proper inhabitants, and particularly with reaſonable creatures (for he that made thoſe vaſt bodies *made them not in vain, he made them to be inhabited*;) if we further ſuppoſe that each of the innumerable fixed ſtars is a ſun, the center of habitable worlds, and that all theſe worlds, like our own, ſwarm with life, and particularly with various claſſes of reaſonable beings (which is not at all unlikely if we argue from parity of caſes, from things well known to things leſs known, or from the immenſe overflowing goodneſs, wiſdom and power of the great Creator, who can repleniſh the infinite voids of ſpace with being, life, and reaſon, and with equal eaſe produce and ſupport ten thouſand worlds as ten thouſand

 grains;)

* I do not forget that the original is *myriads of angels.* But the word is often, I think, generally uſed in the Greek claſſics, not for any definite number, but for a great and innumerable multitude. And ſo it is uſed here.

grains;) if we ſuppoſe that his creative perfections will not lie inactive for ever, contented with one exertion for ſix days, but that he ſtill employs and will employ them for ever in cauſing new worlds, repleniſhed with moral agents, to ſtart into exiſtence here and there in the endleſs vacancies of ſpace; and finally, if we ſuppoſe that the flames of hell will blaze dreadfully bright and conſpicuous in the view of all preſent and future creations, or that the deſtructive nature of ſin will be ſome way or another made known to the rational inhabitants of all worlds by the puniſhment inflicted upon a number of men and angels, and that by this means they are effectually deterred from ſin, and preſerved from the miſery inſeparable from it; I ſay, if we admit theſe ſuppoſitions, ſome of which are undoubtedly true, and the reſt I think not improbable, then it will follow that the number of holy and happy creatures in the univerſe will be incomparably greater than that of miſerable criminals; and that the puniſhment of the latter is one principal mean of preſerving this infinite number in obedience and happineſs; and conſequently is highly conducive to the public happineſs, and expreſſive of the love and goodneſs of the univerſal Ruler to the immenſe community of his ſubjects. And thus *God is love*, even in the moſt terrible diſplays of his vindictive juſtice.

To illuſtrate this ſubject, conſider farther,

III. "That criminals are incompetent judges of vindictive juſtice." They are parties, and it is their intereſt there ſhould be no ſuch attribute as juſtice in the Deity. It is natural for them to flatter themſelves that their crimes are ſmall; that their Judge will ſuffer them to eſcape with impunity, or with a gentle puniſhment; and that if he ſhould do otherwiſe he would be unmerciful, unjuſt, and cruel. The exceſs of ſelf-love ſuggeſts to them a thouſand excuſes and extenuations of their guilt, and flatters them with a thouſand favourable preſumptions. An impenitent criminal is always an ungenerous, mean-ſpirited, ſelfiſh creature, and

and has nothing of that noble diſintereſted ſelf-denial and impartiality which would generouſly condemn himſelf and approve of that ſentence by which he dies. A little acquaintance with the conduct of mankind will ſoon make us ſenſible of their partiality and wrong judgments in matters where ſelf is concerned; and particularly how unfit they are to form an eſtimate of juſtice when themſelves are to ſtand as criminals at its bar. Now this is the caſe of all mankind in the affair now under conſideration. They are criminals at the bar of divine juſtice; they are the parties to be tried; they are under the dominion of a ſelfiſh ſpirit; it is natural to them to palliate their own crimes, and to form flattering expectations from the clemency of their Judge. And are they fit perſons to preſcribe to their Judge how he ſhould deal with them, or what meaſure of puniſhment he ought to inflict upon them? Sinners! dare you uſurp this high province? Dare you

> " Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
> " Rejudge his juſtice, be the god of God?"*

Rather ſtand at the bar, ye criminals! that is your place. Do not dare to aſcend the throne; that is the place of your Judge. Stand ſilent, and await his righteous ſentence, which is always juſt, always beſt: or, if creatures muſt judge of the juſtice of their Sovereign, I appeal to the ſaints; I appeal to angels, thoſe competent, diſintereſted judges; I appeal to every upright impartial being in the univerſe. They approve, they celebrate, they admire, and love all the diſplays of punitive juſtice as neceſſary to the public good; and their judgment may be depended on: it is not miſled by ignorance nor perverted by ſelf-intereſt. To whom would you appeal as judges of the proceedings of courts of juſtice among men? To malefactors in a dungeon, who have made juſtice their enemy, and who are therefore enemies to it? No; but you would appeal to obedient ſubjects, who are not obnoxious to juſtice

* Pope's Eſſay on Man.

juſtice themſelves, but enjoy protection under its guardianſhip, and are ſenſible of its beauty and public utility? They all approve it with one voice, and would look upon a ſupreme magiſtrate without it as a very contemptible and odious character, and eſſentially deficient in goodneſs. Hence it follows that even the punitive juſtice of God not only is in reality, but to all impartial judges appears to be a moſt amiable, engaging, and beneficent perfection; majeſtic indeed, but not forbidding; awful, but not ſullen and hateful; terrible, but only to criminals; and deſtructive only to what deſtroys the public good. I have ſo far anticipated myſelf that I need hardly add,

IV. "That proceedings ſimilar to thoſe of the divine government are not only approved of as juſt in all human governments, but alſo loved and admired as amiable and praiſe-worthy, and highly eſſential to the goodneſs and benevolence of a Ruler."

Does the ſupreme Lawgiver annex ſevere penalties to his laws which render the diſobedient miſerable for ever? So do human governments with the unanimous approbation of their ſubjects; they inflict puniſhments that affect life, and cut off the offender from civil ſociety for ever; and this is the only kind of everlaſting puniſhment that can be endured or executed by mortals. Does Jehovah maintain good order in his immenſe empire, protect his ſubjects, and deter them from offending by making examples of the guilty? and does he ſecure and advance the good of the whole by the conſpicuous puniſhment of obnoxious individuals? This is done every day for the ſame ends in human governments, and that with univerſal approbation. Does he inflict puniſhments that are not at all intended for the reformation and advantage of the guilty ſufferer, but only for the admonition and benefit of others? This is always the caſe in human governments when the puniſhment reaches to the life, for then the offender himſelf is put out of all capacity of reformation or perſonal advantage by it, but he ſuffers entirely

entirely for the good of others. Even criminals muſt be made uſeful to ſociety; and this is the only uſe they are fit to anſwer. Would it be inexpedient and greatly injurious for a magiſtrate in his public character to forgive crimes and ſuffer criminals to eſcape, though to do ſo in a private character might be a virtue? Juſt ſo God, who is the ſupreme Magiſtrate of the univerſe, and not at all to be conſidered in this caſe as a private perſon acting only in a private character, the great God I ſay is obliged by his regard for his own honour and the benefit of his ſubjects, to inflict proper puniſhments and diſtribute his pardoning mercy to individuals conſiſtently with the general good of the whole. What would be revenge in a private perſon, which is the ruling paſſion of devils, is juſtice, honour and benevolence itſelf in the ſupreme Ruler of the world; and a failure in this would render him not only leſs glorious and majeſtic, but leſs amiable, leſs beneficent to his creatures.

I know hardly any thing of ſo much importance to give us juſt ſentiments of the proceedings of God with his creatures, as that we ſhould conceive of him as a moral Ruler or the ſupreme Magiſtrate of the world. And it is owing to their not conſidering him in this character that ſinners indulge ſuch miſtaken dangerous preſumptions concerning him. They chooſe to conceive of him under ſome fond and tender name, as a Being of infinite grace, the indulgent Father of his creatures, &c. All this is true; but it is equally true that he is their moral Ruler as well as their Father. His creatures are his ſubjects as well as his children; and he muſt act the wiſe and righteous Magiſtrate as well as the tender Father towards them. His goodneſs is that of a Ruler, and not of a private perſon; and his pardoning of ſin and receiving offenders into favour, are not private kindneſſes but acts of government, and therefore they muſt be conducted with the utmoſt wiſdom; for a wrong ſtep in his infinite adminiſtration, which affects ſuch innumerable multi-

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tudes of ſubjects, would be an infinite evil, and might admit of no reparation.

Though I have thus enlarged upon this ſubject, yet I am far from exhauſting my materials. But theſe things I hope are ſufficient to convince your underſtandings that divine juſtice is not that unkind, cruel, and ſavage thing ſinners are wont to imagine it; but that God is juſt, becauſe *God is love:* and that he puniſhes not becauſe he is the enemy, but becauſe he is the friend of his creatures, and becauſe he loves the whole too well to let particular offenders do miſchief with impunity*.

I ſhall only add, that this is the view Jehovah has given of himſelf in the cleareſt manifeſtation of his perfections that he ever made to mortals. He promiſes his favourite Moſes, that he would *make all his goodneſs paſs before him.* Obſerve, it is his goodneſs he intends to exhibit; and the proclamation runs thus; *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, forgiving iniquity,* &c. That theſe are acts or modifications of goodneſs, will be eaſily granted. But obſerve, it is added even in this proclamation of his goodneſs, *That he will by no means clear the guilty*; intimating, that to be juſt and puniſh ſin is an act of goodneſs, as well as to be merciful and to forgive it.

And now when we have this copious ſubject in review, does it not ſuggeſt to us ſuch concluſions as theſe:

I. May

* It may perhaps be objected, "That to repreſent juſtice under the notion of love, is to affect ſingularity in language, to deſtroy the diſtinction of the divine attributes, and the eſſential differences of things."—To which I anſwer, 1. That a catachreſis may be beautiful and emphatical, though it be always a ſeeming impropriety in language. Such is this repreſentation, "Divine juſtice, divine love." 2. I do not deny that God's executing righteous puniſhment upon the guilty may be called juſtice; but then it is his love to the public that excites him to do this; and therefore his doing it may be properly denominated love, as well as juſtice, or love under the name of juſtice, which is love ſtill. 3. I do not mean that the uſual names of things ſhould be changed, but that we ſhould affix ſuitable ideas to them. We may retain the name of juſtice ſtill, but let us not affix ideas to it that are inconſiſtent with divine love. Let us not look upon it as the attribute of a tyrant, but of a wiſe and good ruler.

I. May we not conclude that the caſe of impenitent ſinners is deſperate indeed when it is not exceſſive rigour, not a malignity of temper, not tyranny, or a ſavage delight in torture that condemns them, but goodneſs itſelf, love itſelf? Even the gentler perfections of the Deity, thoſe from which they derive their preſumptuous hopes, are conſpired againſt them, and unite their forces to render them miſerable, in order to prevent greater miſery from ſpreading through the univerſe. Impenitent ſinners! even the unbounded love of God to his creatures is your enemy. Love, under the name and form of juſtice, which is equally love ſtill, demands your execution; and to ſuffer you to eſcape would not only be an act of injuſtice, but an act of malignity and hoſtility againſt the whole ſyſtem of rational beings. Therefore repent and be holy, otherwiſe divine love will not ſuffer you to be happy. *God is love*; therefore will he confine you in the infernal priſon, as a regard to the public welfare in human governments ſhuts up criminals in a dungeon, and madmen in Bedlam.

II. May we not hence conclude that all the acts of the Deity may be reſolved into the benevolent principle of love? *God is love*; therefore he made this vaſt univerſe, and planted it ſo thick with variegated life. *God is love*; therefore he ſtill rules the world he has made, and inflicts chaſtiſements and judgments upon it from every age. *God is love*; therefore he ſpared not his own Son, but made him the victim of his juſtice. *God is love*; therefore he requires perfect holineſs, perfect obedience from all his ſubjects. *God is love*; therefore he has enacted ſuch tremendous ſanctions to his law, and executes them in their full extent upon offenders. *God is love*; therefore he has made the priſon of hell, and there confines in chains of everlaſting darkneſs thoſe malevolent creatures that would be nuiſances to ſociety, and public miſchiefs if ſuffered to run at large. In ſhort, whatever he does, he does

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it becauſe he is love. How amiable a view of him this! Therefore,

III. We may certainly conclude that if God be love, then all his creatures ought to love him. Love him, O all ye inhabitants of Heaven! But they need not my exhortation; they know him, and therefore cannot but love him. Love him, all ye inhabitants of the planetary worlds! if ſuch there be. Theſe alſo I hope need no exhortation, for we would willingly perſuade ourſelves that other territories of his immenſe empire have not rebelled againſt him as this earth has done. Love him, O ye children of men! To you I call; but O! I fear I ſhall call in vain. To love him who is all love is the moſt hopeleſs propoſal one can make to the world. But whatever others do, love the Lord, all ye his ſaints! You I know cannot reſiſt the motion. Surely your love even now is all on fire. *Love the Lord, O my ſoul!* Amen.

SERMON XIX.

The General Reſurrection.

John v. 28, 29. *The hour is coming in the which all that are in the grave ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the reſurrection of damnation.*

EVER ſince ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin, this earth has been a vaſt grave-yard, or burying-place for her children. In every age, and in every country, that ſentence has been executing, *Duſt thou art, and unto duſt thou ſhalt return.* The earth has been arched with graves, the laſt lodgings of mortals,

tals, and the bottom of the ocean paved with the bones of men*. Human nature was at firſt confined to one pair, but how ſoon and how wide did it ſpread! How inconceivably numerous are the ſons of Adam! How many different nations on our globe contain many millions of men, even in one generation! And how many generations have ſucceeded one another in the long run of near ſix thouſand years! Let imagination call up this vaſt army; children that juſt light upon our globe and then wing their flight into an unknown world; the grey-headed that have had a long journey through life; the blooming youth and the middle-aged, let them paſs in review before us from all countries and from all ages; and how vaſt and aſtoniſhing the multitude! If the poſterity of one man (Abraham) by one ſon was, according to the divine promiſe, as the ſtars of Heaven, or as the ſand by the ſea-ſhore, innumerable, what numbers can compute the multitudes that have ſprung from all the Patriarchs, the ſons of Adam and Noah! But what is become of them all? Alas! they are turned into earth, their original element; they are all impriſoned in the grave except the preſent generation, and we are dropping one after another in a quick ſucceſſion into that *place appointed for all living*. There has not been perhaps a moment of time for five thouſand years but what ſome one or other has ſunk into the manſions of the dead; and in ſome fatal hours, by the ſword of war or the devouring jaws of earthquakes, thouſands have been cut off and ſwept away at once, and left in one huge promiſcuous carnage. The greateſt number of mankind beyond compariſon are ſleeping under ground. There lies beauty mouldering into duſt, rotting into ſtench and loathſomeneſs, and feeding the vileſt worms. There lies the head that once wore a crown, as low and contemptible as the meaneſt beggar.

* No ſpot on earth but has ſupply'd a grave;
And human ſculls the ſpacious ocean pave.
YOUNG.

There lie the mighty giants, the heroes and conquerors, the Samſons, the Ajax's, the Alexanders, and the Cæſars of the world; there they lie ſtupid, ſenſeleſs, and inactive, and unable to drive off the worms that riot on their marrow, and make their houſes in thoſe ſockets where the eyes ſparkled with living luſtre. There lie the wiſe and the learned, as rotten, as helpleſs as the fool. There lie ſome that we once converſed with, ſome that were our friends our companions; and there lie our fathers and mothers, our brothers and ſiſters.

And ſhall they lie there always? Shall this body, this curious workmanſhip of Heaven, ſo wonderfully and fearfully made, always lie in ruins, and never be repaired? Shall the wide-extended valleys of dry bones never more live? This we know, that *it is not a thing impoſſible with God to raiſe the dead.* He that could firſt form our bodies out of nothing, is certainly able to form them anew, and repair the waſtes of time and death. But what is his declared will in this caſe? On this the matter turns; and this is fully revealed in my text. *The hour is coming, when all that are in the graves*, all that are dead, without exception, *ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and ſhall come forth.*

And for what end ſhall they come forth? O! for very different purpoſes; *ſome to the reſurrection of life, and ſome to the reſurrection of damnation.*

And what is the ground of this vaſt diſtinction? Or what is the difference in character between thoſe that ſhall receive ſo different a doom? It is this, *They that have done good ſhall riſe to life, and they that have done evil, to damnation.* It is this, and this only, that will then be the rule of diſtinction.

I would avoid all art in my method of handling this ſubject, and intend only to illuſtrate the ſeveral parts of the text. *All that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done well, to the*

the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the reſurrection of damnation!

I. They that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice. The voice of the Son of God here probably means the ſound of the archangel's trumpet, which is called his voice, becauſe ſounded by his orders and attended with his all-quickening power. This all-awakening call to the tenants of the grave we frequently find foretold in ſcripture. I ſhall refer you to two plain paſſages. *Behold*, ſays St. Paul, *I ſhew you a myſtery*, an important and aſtoniſhing ſecret, *we ſhall not all ſleep*; that is, mankind will not all be ſleeping in death when that day comes, there will be a generation then alive upon earth; and though they cannot have a proper reſurrection, yet they ſhall paſs through a change equivalent to it. *We ſhall all be changed*, ſays he, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump, for the trumpet ſhall ſound*, it ſhall give the alarm; and no ſooner is the awful clangor heard than all the living ſhall be transformed into immortals; *and the dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible*; and we, *who are then alive, ſhall be changed*, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. this is all the difference, *they ſhall be raiſed, and we ſhall be changed.* This awful prelude of the trumpet is alſo mentioned in 1 Theſſ. iv. 15, 16. *We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, ſhall not prevent them which are aſleep*; that is, we ſhall not be beforehand with them in meeting our deſcending Lord, *for the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*; that is, with a godlike trump, ſuch as it becomes his majeſty to ſound, *and the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt*; that is, before the living ſhall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and when they are riſen, and the living transformed, they ſhall aſcend together to the place of judgment.

My brethren, realize the majeſty and terror of this univerſal alarm. When the dead are ſleeping in the ſilent grave: when the living are thoughtleſs and unapprehenſive

apprehenſive of the grand event, or intent on other purſuits; ſome of them aſleep in the dead of night; ſome of them diſſolved in ſenſual pleaſures, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage; ſome of them planning or executing ſchemes for riches or honours; ſome in the very act of ſin; the generality ſtupid and careleſs about the concerns of eternity, and the dreadful day juſt at hand; and a few here and there converſing with their God, and *looking for the glorious appearance of their Lord and Saviour*; when the courſe of nature runs on uniform and regular as uſual, and infidel ſcoffers are taking umbrage from thence to aſk, *Where is the promiſe of his coming? for ſince the fathers fell aſleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* 2 Peter iii. 4. In ſhort, when there are no more viſible appearances of this approaching day, than of the deſtruction of Sodom on that fine clear morning in which Lot fled away; or of the deluge, when Noah entered into the ark: then in that hour of unapprehenſive ſecurity, then ſuddenly ſhall the heavens open over the aſtoniſhed world; then ſhall the all-alarming clangor break over their heads like a clap of thunder in a clear ſky. Immediately the living turn their gazing eyes upon the amazing phænomenon: a few hear the long-expected ſound with rapture, and lift up their heads with joy, aſſured that *the day of their redemption is come*, while the thoughtleſs world are ſtruck with the wildeſt horror and conſternation. In the ſame inſtant the ſound reaches all the manſions of the dead, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they are raiſed, and the living are changed. This call will be as animating to all the ſons of men as that call to a ſingle perſon, *Lazarus, come forth.* O what a ſurpriſe will this be to the thoughtleſs world! Should this alarm burſt over our heads this moment, into what a terror would it ſtrike many in this aſſembly? Such will be the terror, ſuch the conſternation, when it actually comes to paſs. Sinners will be the ſame timorous,

ſelf-

ſelf-condemned creatures then as they are now. And then they will not be able to ſtop their ears, who are deaf to all the gentler calls of the goſpel now. Then the trump of God will conſtrain them to hear and fear, to whom the miniſters of Chriſt now preach in vain. Then they muſt all hear, for,

II. My text tells you, *all that are in the graves*, all without exception, *ſhall hear his voice.* Now the voice of mercy calls, reaſon pleads, conſcience warns, but multitudes will not hear. But this is a voice which ſhall, which muſt reach every one of the millions of mankind, and not one of them will be able ſtop his ears. Infants and giants, kings and ſubjects, all ranks, all ages of mankind ſhall hear the call. The living ſhall ſtart and be changed, and the dead riſe at the ſound. The duſt that was once alive and formed a human body, whether it flies in the air, floats in the ocean, or vegetates on earth, ſhall hear the new-creating fiat. Wherever the fragments of the human frame are ſcattered, this all-penetrating call ſhall reach and ſpeak them into life. We may conſider this voice as a ſummons not only to dead bodies to riſe, but to the ſouls that once animated them to appear, and be re-united to them, whether in heaven or hell. To the grave the call will be, *Ariſe, ye dead, and come to judgment*; to heaven, ye *ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*; "deſcend to the world whence you originally came; and aſſume your new-formed bodies;" to hell, "Come forth and appear, ye damned ghoſts, ye priſoners of darkneſs, and be again united to the bodies in which you once ſinned, that in them ye may now ſuffer." Thus will this ſummons ſpread through every corner of the univerſe; and Heaven, Earth and Hell, and all their inhabitants, ſhall hear and obey. Devils, as well as the ſinners of our race, will tremble at the ſound; for now they know they can plead no more as they once did, *Torment us not before the time*; for the time is come, and they muſt mingle with the priſoners

ſoners at the bar. And now when all that are in the graves hear this all-quickening voice,

III. *They ſhall come forth.* Now methinks I ſee, I hear the earth heaving, charnel-houſes rattling, tombs burſting, graves opening. Now the nations under ground begin to ſtir. There is a noiſe and a ſhaking among the dry bones. The duſt is all alive, and in motion, and the globe breaks and trembles, as with an earthquake, while this vaſt army is working its way through and burſting into life. The ruins of human bodies are ſcattered far and wide, and have paſſed through many and ſurpriſing transformations. A limb in one country, and another in another; here the head and there the trunk, and the ocean rolling between*. Multitudes have ſunk in a watery grave, been ſwallowed up by the monſters of the deep, and transformed into a part of their fleſh. Multitudes have been eaten by beaſts and birds of prey, and incorporated with them; and ſome have been devoured by their fellow-men in the rage of a deſperate hunger, or of unnatural cannibal appetite, and digeſted into a part of them. Multitudes have mouldered into duſt, and this duſt has been blown about by winds, and waſhed away with water, or it has petrified into ſtone, or been burnt into brick to form dwellings for their poſterity; or it has grown up in grain, trees, plants, and other vegetables, which are the ſupport of man and beaſt, and are transformed into their fleſh and blood. But through all theſe various transformations and changes, not a particle that was eſſential to one human body has been loſt, or incorporated with another human body, ſo as to become an eſſential part of it. And as to thoſe particles that were not eſſential, they are not neceſſary to the identity of the body or of the perſon; and therefore we need not think they will be raiſed again. The omniſcient God knows how

* This was the fate of Pompey, who was ſlain on the African ſhore. His body was left there, and his head carried over the Mediterranean to Julius Cæſar.

how to collect, diſtinguiſh, and compound all thoſe ſcattered and mingled ſeeds of our mortal bodies. And now, at the ſound of the trumpet, they ſhall all be collected, wherever they were ſcattered; all properly ſorted and united, however they were confuſed; atom to its fellow-atom, bone to its fellow-bone. Now methinks you may ſee the air darkened with fragments of bodies flying from country to country, to meet and join their proper parts:

——— "Scatter'd limbs, and all
The various bones obſequious to the call,
Self-mov'd advance; the neck perhaps to meet
The diſtant head, the diſtant legs, the feet.
Dreadful to view, ſee through the duſky ſky
Fragments of bodies in confuſion fly,
To diſtant regions journeying, there to claim
Deſerted members, and complete the frame—
The ſever'd head and trunk ſhall join once more,
Tho' realms now riſe between, and oceans roar.
The trumpet's ſound each vagrant mote ſhall hear,
Or fixt in earth, or if afloat in air,
Obey the ſignal, wafted in the wind,
And not one ſleeping atom lag behind."—*
All hear; and now, in fairer proſpect ſhewn,
Limb clings to limb, and bone rejoins its bone.—†

Then,

* Young's Laſt Day, Book II.

† Theſe two laſt lines are taken from a poem, which is a lively imitation of Dr. Young, entitled, *The Day of Judgment*, aſcribed to Mr. Ogilvie, a promiſing young genius of Aberdeen in Scotland, not above nineteen years of age, as I was informed, when he compoſed this poem. The lines preceding theſe quoted are as follow:

O'er boiling waves the ſevered members ſwim,
Each breeze is loaded with a broken limb:
The living atoms, with peculiar care,
Drawn from their cells, come flying thro' the air.
Where'er they lurk'd, thro' ages undecay'd,
Deep in the rock, or cloth'd ſome ſmiling mead;
Or in the lily's ſnowy boſom grew,
Or ting'd the ſaphire with its lovely blue;
Or in ſome purling ſtream refreſh'd the plains;
Or form'd the mountain's adamantine veins;
Or gaily ſporting in the breathing ſpring,
Perfum'd the whiſp'ring Zephyr's balmy wing.
All hear, &c.

The

Then, my brethren, your duſt and mine ſhall be re-animated and organized; *and though after our ſkin worms deſtroy theſe bodies, yet in our fleſh ſhall we ſee God.* Job xix. 16.

And what a vaſt improvement will the frail nature of man then receive? Our bodies will then be ſubſtantially the ſame; but how different in qualities, in ſtrength, in agility, in capacities for pleaſure or pain, in beauty or deformity, in glory or terror, according to the moral character of the perſons to whom they belong? Matter, we know, is capable of prodigious alterations and refinements; and there it will appear in the higheſt perfection. The bodies of the ſaints will be formed glorious, incorruptible, without the ſeeds of ſickneſs and death. The glorified body of Chriſt, which is undoubtedly carried to the higheſt perfection that matter is capable of, will be the pattern after which they ſhall be formed. *He will change our vile body*, ſays St. Paul, *that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body.* Phil. iii. 21. *Fleſh and blood*, in their preſent ſtate of groſſneſs and frailty, *cannot inherit the kingdom of God*; *neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. But this corruptible body muſt put on incorruption*; *and this mortal muſt put on immortality.* Cor. xv. 50, 53. And how vaſt the change, how high the improvement from its preſent ſtate! *It was ſown in corruption, it ſhall be raiſed in incorruption*; *it was ſown in diſhonour, it ſhall be raiſed in glory*; *it was ſown in weakneſs, it ſhall be raiſed in power*, verſe 42, 43, &c. Then will the body be able to bear up under the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory: it will no longer be a clog or an incumbrance to the ſoul, but a proper inſtrument and

The thought ſeems to be borrowed from Mr. Addiſon's fine Latin poem on the Reſurrection, in which are the following beautiful lines:

Jam pulvis varias terræ diſperſa per oras,
Sive inter venas teneri concreta metalli,
Senſim diriguit, ſeu ſeſe immiſcuit herbis,
Explicita eſt; molem rurſus coaleſcit in unam
Diviſum Funus, ſparſos prior alligat artus
Junctura, aptanturq; iterum cocuntia membra.

and aſſiſtant in all the exalted ſervices and enjoyments of the heavenly ſtate.

The bodies of the wicked will alſo be improved, but their improvements will all be terrible and vindictive. Their capacities will be thoroughly enlarged, but then it will be that they may be made capable of greater miſery: they will be ſtrengthened, but it will be that they may bear the heavier load of torment. Their ſenſations will be more quick and ſtrong, but it will be that they may feel the more exquiſite pain. They will be raiſed immortal, that they may not be conſumed by everlaſting fire, or eſcape puniſhment by diſſolution or annihilation. In ſhort, their augmented ſtrength, their enlarged capacities, and their immortality will be their eternal curſe; and they would willingly exchange them for the fleeting duration of a fading flower, or the faint ſenſations of an infant. The only power they would rejoice in is, that of ſelf-annihilation.

And now when the bodies are completely formed and fit to be inhabited, the ſouls that once animated them, being collected from Heaven and Hell, re-enter and take poſſeſſion of their old manſions. They are united in bonds which ſhall never more be diſſolved; and the mouldering tabernacles are now become everlaſting habitations.

And with what joy will the ſpirits of the righteous welcome their old companions from their long ſleep in the duſt, and congratulate their glorious reſurrection! How will they rejoice to re-enter their old habitations, now ſo completely repaired and highly improved? to find thoſe bodies which were once their incumbrance, once frail and mortal, in which they were impriſoned and languiſhed, once their temptation, tainted with the ſeeds of ſin, now their aſſiſtants and co-partners in the buſineſs of Heaven, now vigorous, incorruptible, and immortal, now free from all corrupt mixtures, and ſhining in all the beauties of perfect holineſs? In theſe bodies they once ſerved their God with honeſt though

feeble efforts, conflicted with ſin and temptation, and paſſed through all the united trials and hardſhips of mortality and the chriſtian life. But now they are united to them for more exalted and bliſsful purpoſes. The lungs that were wont to heave with penitential ſighs and groans, ſhall now ſhout forth their joys and the praiſes of their God and Saviour. The heart that was once broken with ſorrows ſhall now be bound up for ever, and overflow with immortal pleaſures. Thoſe very eyes, that were wont to run down with tears and to behold many a tragical ſight, ſhall now *behold the King in his beauty*, ſhall behold the Saviour whom, though unſeen, they loved, and all the glories of heaven; and *God ſhall wipe away all their tears*. All the ſenſes, which were once avenues of pain, ſhall now be inlets of the moſt exalted pleaſure. In ſhort, every organ, every member ſhall be employed in the moſt noble ſervices and enjoyments, inſtead of the ſordid and laborious drudgery, and the painful ſufferings of the preſent ſtate. Bleſſed change indeed! Rejoice, ye children of God, in the proſpect of it.

But how ſhall I glance a thought upon the dreadful caſe of the wicked in that tremendous day! While their bodies burſt from their graves, the miſerable ſpectacles of horror and deformity, ſee the millions of gloomy ghoſts that once animated them, riſe like pillars of ſmoke from the bottomleſs pit! and with what reluctance and anguiſh do they re-enter their old habitations! O what a dreadful meeting! what ſhocking ſalutations! "And muſt I be chained to thee again (may the guilty ſoul ſay) O thou accurſed, polluted body, thou ſyſtem of deformity and terror! In thee I once ſinned, by thee I was once enſnared, debaſed, and ruined: to gratify thy vile luſts and appetites I neglected my own immortal intereſts, degraded my native dignity, and made myſelf miſerable for ever. And haſt thou now met me to torment me for ever? O that thou hadſt ſtill ſlept in the duſt, and never been repaired again! Let me rather be condemned to animate a toad

a toad or ſerpent than that odious body once defiled with ſin, and the inſtrument of my guilty pleaſures, now made ſtrong and immortal to torment me with ſtrong and immortal pains. Once indeed I received ſenſations of pleaſure from thee, but now thou art transformed into an engine of torture. No more ſhall I through thine eyes behold the cheerful light of the day and the beautiful proſpects of nature, but the thick glooms of hell, grim and ghaſtly ghoſts, heaven at an impaſſable diſtance, and all the horrid ſights of woe in the infernal regions. No more ſhall thine ears charm me with the harmony of ſounds, but terrify and diſtreſs me with the echo of eternal groans, and the thunder of almighty vengeance! No more ſhall the gratification of thine appetites afford me pleaſure, but thine appetites, for ever hungry, for ever unſatisfied, ſhall eternally torment me with their eager importunate cravings. No more ſhall thy tongue be employed in mirth, and jeſt, and ſong, but complain and groan, and blaſpheme, and roar for ever. Thy feet, that once walked in the flowery enchanted paths of ſin, muſt now walk on the diſmal burning ſoil of hell. O my wretched companion! I parted with thee with pain and reluctance in the ſtruggles of death, but now I meet thee with greater terror and agony. Return to thy bed in the duſt; there ſleep and rot, and let me never ſee thy ſhocking viſage more." In vain the petition! the reluctant ſoul muſt enter its priſon, from whence it ſhall never more be diſmiſſed. And if we might indulge imagination ſo far, we might ſuppoſe the body begins to recriminate in ſuch language as this: "Come, guilty ſoul, enter thy old manſion; if it be horrible and ſhocking, it is owing to thyſelf. Was not the animal frame, the brutal nature, ſubjected to thy government, who art a rational principle? Inſtead of being debaſed by me, it became thee to have not only retained the dignity of thy nature, but to have exalted mine, by noble employments and gratifications worthy an earthly body united to an immortal ſpirit.

Thou

Thou mighteſt have reſtrained my members from being the inſtruments of ſin, and made them the inſtruments of righteouſneſs. My knees would have bowed at the throne of grace, but thou didſt not affect that poſture. Mine eyes would have read, and mine ears heard the word of life; but thou wouldſt not ſet them to that employ, or wouldſt not attend to it. And now it is but juſt the body thou didſt proſtitute to ſin ſhould be the inſtrument of thy puniſhment. Indeed, fain would I relapſe into ſenſeleſs earth as I was, and continue in that inſenſibility for ever:—but didſt thou not hear the all-rouſing trumpet juſt now? did it not even ſhake the foundations of thy infernal priſon? It was that call that awakened me, and ſummoned me to meet thee, and I could not reſiſt it. Therefore come, miſerable ſoul, take poſſeſſion of this frame, and let us prepare for everlaſting burning. O that it were now poſſible to die! O that we could be again ſeparated, and never be united more! Vain wiſh; the weight of mountains, the pangs of hell, the flames of unquenchable fire, can never diſſolve theſe chains which now bind us together!"*

O! Sirs, what a ſhocking interview is this! O the glorious, dreadful morning of the reſurrection! What ſcenes of unknown joy and terror will then open? Methinks we muſt always have it in proſpect; it muſt even

* The Rev. Mr. John Reynolds, in his poem entitled *Death's Viſion*, introduces the ſoul ſpeaking againſt the body, and afterwards checking its cenſures, and turning them upon itſelf, in a vein of thought not unlike that of Mr. Davies.

Go, tempter, go, as thou haſt been
A quick extinguiſher of heav'nly fires!
A ſource of black enormity and ſin,
Thou cramp of ſacred motions and deſires!
How brave and bleſs'd am I,
Unfetter'd from thy company,
Thou enemy of my joys and me?
But pardon that I thus
Unconſciouſly accuſe!
How much more cruel have I been to thee!
"'Twas cruel I oblig'd thee to obey
"The wilful dictates of my guilty ſway."

even now engage our thoughts, and fill us with trembling ſolicitude, and make it the great object of our labour and purſuit to ſhare in the reſurrection of the juſt.

But for what ends do theſe ſleeping multitudes riſe? For what purpoſes do they come forth? My text will tell you,

IV. They ſhall come forth, *ſome to the reſurrection of life, and ſome to the reſurrection of damnation.* They are ſummoned from their graves to ſtand at the bar, and brought out of priſon by angelic guards to paſs their laſt trial. And as in this impartial trial they will be found to be perſons of very different characters, the righteous Judge of the earth will accordingly pronounce their different doom.

See a glorious *multitude, which none can number,* openly acquitted, pronounced bleſſed, and welcomed *into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.* Now they enter upon a ſtate which deſerves the name of life. They are all vital, all active, all glorious, all happy. They *ſhine brighter than the ſtars in the firmament; like the ſun for ever and ever.* All their faculties overflow with happineſs. They mingle with the glorious company of angels; they behold that Saviour whom unſeen they loved; they dwell in eternal intimacy with the Father of their ſpirits; they are employed with ever-new and growing delight in the exalted ſervices of the heavenly ſanctuary. They ſhall never more fear nor feel the leaſt touch of ſorrow, pain, or any kind of miſery, but ſhall be as happy as their natures can admit through an immortal duration. What a glorious new creation is here! what illuſtrious creatures formed of the duſt! And ſhall any of us join in this happy company? O! ſhall any of us, feeble, dying, ſinful creatures, ſhine in their glory and happineſs? This is a moſt intereſting enquiry, and I would have you think of it with trembling anxiety; and I ſhall preſently anſwer it in its place.

The

The proſpect would be delightful, if our charity could hope that this will be the happy end of all the ſons of men. But, alas! multitudes, and we have reaſon to fear the far greater number ſhall come forth, not to the reſurrection of life, but to the reſurrection of damnation. Damnation! what terror is in the ſound. If audacious ſinners in our world make light of it, and pray for it on every trifling occaſion, their infernal brethren that feel its tremendous import are not ſo hardy, but tremble and groan, and can trifle with it no more.

Let us realize the miſerable doom of this claſs of mankind. See them burſting into life from their ſubterranean dungeons, hideous ſhapes of deformity and terror, expreſſive of the vindictive deſign for which their bodies are repaired, and of the boiſterous and malignant paſſions that ravage their ſouls. Horror throbs through every vein, and glares wild and furious in their eyes. Every joint trembles, and every countenance looks down-caſt and gloomy. Now they ſee that tremendous day of which they were warned in vain, and ſhudder at thoſe terrors of which they once made light. They immediately know the grand buſineſs of the day, and the dreadful purpoſe for which they are rouſed from their ſlumbers in the grave; to be tried, to be convicted, to be condemned, and to be dragged away to execution. Conſcience has been anticipating the trial in a ſeparate ſtate; and no ſooner is the ſoul united to the body than immediately conſcience aſcends its throne in the breaſt, and begins to accuſe, to convict, to paſs ſentence, to upbraid, and to torment. The ſinner is condemned, condemned at his own tribunal, before he arrives at the bar of his Judge. The firſt act of conſciouſneſs in his own ſtate of exiſtence is a conviction that he is condemned, an irrevocably condemned creature. He enters the court, knowing beforehand how it will go with him. When he finds himſelf ordered to the left hand of his Judge, when he hears the dreadful ſentence thundered out againſt

againſt him, *Depart from me accurſed*, it was but what he expected. Now he can flatter himſelf with vain hopes, and ſhut his eyes againſt the light of conviction, but then he will not be able to hope better; then he muſt know the worſt of his caſe. The formality of the judicial trial is neceſſary for the conviction of the world, but not for his; his own conſcience has already determined his condition. However, to convince others of the juſtice of his doom, he is dragged and guarded from his grave to the judgment-ſeat by fierce unrelenting devils, now his tempters, but then his tormentors. With what horror does he view the burning throne and the frowning face of his Judge, that Jeſus whom he once diſregarded, in ſpite of all his dying love and the ſalvation he offered! How does he wiſh for a covering of rocks and mountains to conceal him from his angry eye! but all in vain. Appear he muſt. He is ordered to the left among the trembling criminals; and now the trial comes on. All his evil deeds, and all his omiſſions of duty, are now produced againſt him. All the mercies he abuſed, all the chaſtiſements he deſpiſed, all the means of grace he neglected or miſimproved, every ſinful, and even every idle word, nay, his moſt ſecret thoughts and diſpoſitions are all expoſed, and brought into judgment againſt him. And when the Judge puts it to him, "Is it not ſo ſinner? Are not theſe charges true?" conſcience obliges him to confeſs and cry out, Guilty! guilty! And now the trembling criminal being plainly convicted, and left without all plea and all excuſe, the ſupreme Judge, in ſtern majeſty and inexorable juſtice, thunders out the dreadful ſentence, *Depart from me ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* Matt. xxv. 41. O tremendous doom! every word is big with terror, and ſhoots a thunderbolt through the heart. "Depart: away from my preſence; I cannot bear ſo loathſome a ſight. I once invited thee to come to me, that thou mighteſt have life, but thou wouldſt not regard the invitation; and

now

now thou ſhalt never hear that inviting voice more. Depart from me; from me, the only Fountain of happineſs, the only proper Good for an immortal mind." 'But, Lord,' (we may ſuppoſe the criminal to ſay) 'if I muſt depart; bleſs me before I go.' "No," ſays the angry Judge, "depart accurſed; depart with my eternal and heavy curſe upon thee; the curſe of that power that made thee; a curſe dreadfully efficacious, that blaſts whatever it falls upon like flaſhes of conſuming, irreſiſtible lightning." 'But if I muſt go away under thy curſe, (the criminal may be ſuppoſed to ſay) let that be all my puniſhment; let me depart to ſome agreeable, or at leaſt tolerable receſs, where I may meet with ſomething to mitigate the curſe.' "No, depart into fire; there burn in all the excruciating tortures of that outrageous element." 'But, Lord, if I muſt make my bed in fire, O let it be a tranſient blaze, that will ſoon burn itſelf out, and put an end to my torment.' "No, depart into everlaſting fire; there burn without conſuming, and be tormented without end." 'But, Lord, grant me (cries the poor wretch) at leaſt the mitigation of friendly, entertaining, and ſympathizing company; or, if this cannot be granted, grant me this ſmall, this almoſt no requeſt, to be doomed to ſome ſolitary corner in Hell, where I ſhall be puniſhed only by my own conſcience and thine immediate hand; but O deliver me from theſe malicious, tormenting devils; baniſh me into ſome apartment in the infernal pit far from their ſociety.' "No, depart into everlaſting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: thou muſt make one of their wretched crew for ever: thou didſt join with them in ſinning, and now muſt ſhare in their puniſhment: thou didſt ſubmit to them as thy tempters, and now thou muſt ſubmit to them as thy tormentors."

Sentence being pronounced, it is immediately executed. *Theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment.* Matt. xxv. 46. Devils drag them away to the pit, and puſh them down headlong. There they are confined

fined in chains of darkneſs, and in a lake burning with fire and brimſtone, for ever, for ever! In that dreadful word lies the emphaſis of torment: it is an hell in hell. If they might be but releaſed from pain, though it were by annihilation, after they have wept away ten thouſand millions of ages in extremity of pain, it would be ſome mitigation, ſome encouragement; but, alas! when as many millions of ages are paſſed as the ſtars of heaven, or the ſand on the ſea-ſhore, or the atoms of duſt in this huge globe of earth, their puniſhment is as far from an end as when the ſentence was pronounced upon them. For ever! there is no exhauſting of that word; and when it is affixed to the higheſt degree of miſery, the terror of the ſound is utterly inſupportable. See, ſirs, what depends upon time, that ſpan of time we enjoy in this fleeting life. Eternity! awful, all-important eternity depends upon it.

All this while conſcience tears the ſinner's heart with the moſt tormenting reflections. "O what a fair opportunity I once had for ſalvation, had I improved it! I was warned of the conſequences of a life of ſin and careleſſneſs: I was told of the neceſſity of faith, repentance, and univerſal holineſs of heart and life; I enjoyed a ſufficient ſpace for repentance, and all the neceſſary means of ſalvation, but, fool that I was, I neglected all, I abuſed all; I refuſed to part with my ſins; I refuſed to engage ſeriouſly in religion, and to ſeek God in earneſt; and now I am loſt for ever without hope. O! for one of thoſe months, one of thoſe weeks, or even ſo much as one of thoſe days or hours I once trifled away! with what earneſtneſs, with what ſolicitude would I improve it! But all my opportunities are paſt, beyond recovery, and not a moment ſhall be given me for this purpoſe any more. O what a fool was I to ſell my ſoul for ſuch trifles! to ſet ſo light by heaven, and fall into hell through mere neglect and careleſſneſs! Ye impenitent, unthinking ſin-

ners, though you may now be able to ſilence or drown the clamours of your conſciences, yet the time, or rather the dread eternity is coming, when they will ſpeak in ſpite of you; when they will ſpeak home, and be felt by the moſt hardened and remorſeleſs heart. Therefore now regard their warnings while they may be the means of your recovery.

You and I, my brethren, are concerned in the ſolemn tranſaction of the day I have been deſcribing. You and I ſhall either be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, or while mouldering *in the grave, we ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth, either to the reſurrection of life, or to the reſurrection of damnation.* And which, my brethren, ſhall be our doom? Can we foreknow it at this diſtance of time? I propoſed it to your enquiry already, whether you have any good reaſon to hope you ſhall be of that happy number who ſhall riſe to life? and now I propoſe it again with this counterpart, Have you any evidences to hope you ſhall not be of that wretched numerous multitude who ſhall riſe to damnation? If there be an enquiry within the compaſs of human knowledge that demands your ſolicitous thoughts, certainly it is this. Methinks you cannot enjoy one moment's eaſe or ſecurity while this is undetermined. And is it an anſwerable enquiry? Can we now know what are the preſent diſtinguiſhing characters of thoſe who ſhall then receive ſo different a doom? Yes, my text determines the point; for,

V. *They that have done good ſhall come forth to the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the reſurrection of damnation.* Theſe are the grounds of the diſtinction that ſhall then be made in the final ſtates of men, doing good and doing evil. And certainly this diſtinction is perceivable now; to do good and to do evil are not ſo much alike as that it ſhould be impoſſible to diſtinguiſh between them. Let us then ſee what is implied in theſe characters, and to whom of us they reſpectively belong.

1. What

1. What is it to do good? This implies, 1ſt, An honeſt endeavour to keep all God's commandments; I ſay, all his commandments, with regard to God, our neighbour, and ourſelves, whether eaſy or difficult, whether faſhionable or not, whether agreeable to our natural conſtitution or not, whether enjoining the performance of duty or forbidding the commiſſion of ſin, whether regarding the heart or the outward practice. I ſay an uniform, impartial regard to all God's commandments, of whatever kind, in all circumſtances, and at all times, is implied in doing good; for if we do any thing becauſe God commands it, we will endeavour to do every thing that he commands, becauſe where the reaſon of our conduct is the ſame, our conduct itſelf will be the ſame. I do not mean that good men in the preſent ſtate perfectly keep the commandments of God in every thing, or indeed in any thing; but I mean that univerſal obedience is their honeſt endeavour. Their character is in ſome meaſure uniform and all of a piece; that is, they do not place all their religion in obedience to ſome commands which may be agreeable to them, as though that would make atonement for their neglect of others; but, like David, they are for having a reſpect. and indeed *have a reſpect to all God's commandments.* Pſalm cxix. 6. My brethren, try yourſelves by this teſt.

2. To do good in an acceptable manner pre-ſuppoſes a change of nature and a new principle. Our nature is ſo corrupted that nothing really and formally good can be performed by us till it be renewed. To confirm this I ſhall only refer you to Eph. ii. 10. and Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. where being created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works, and receiving a new heart of fleſh, are mentioned as pre-requiſites to our walking in God's ſtatutes. As for the principle of obedience, *it is the love of God*, 1 John v. 3. that is, we muſt obey God becauſe we love him; we muſt do good becauſe

cauſe we delight to do good; otherwiſe it is all hypocriſy, conſtraint, or ſelfiſhneſs, and cannot be acceptable to God. Here again, my brethren, look into your hearts and examine what is the principle of your obedience, and whether ever you have been made new creatures.

3. I muſt add, eſpecially as we live under the goſpel, that your dependence for life muſt not be upon the good you do, but entirely upon the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. After you have done all, you muſt acknowledge you are but unprofitable ſervants, and renounce all your works in point of merit, while you abound in them in point of practice. Phil. iii. 7, 8. This is an eſſential characteriſtic of evangelical obedience, and without it you cannot expect to have a reſurrection to eternal life and bleſſedneſs.

I might enlarge upon this head, but time will not permit; and I hope theſe three characters may ſuffice to ſhew you what is implied in doing good. Let us now proceed to the oppoſite character.

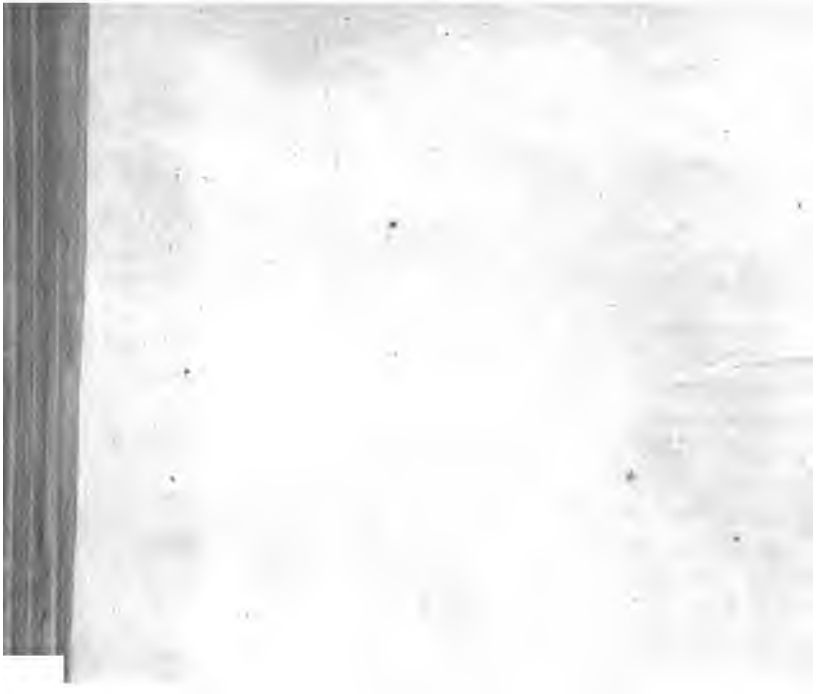
2. What is it to do evil? This implies *ſuch* things as theſe: The habitual neglect of well-doing, or the performance of duties in a languid, formal manner, or without a right principle, and the wilful indulgence of any one ſin; the ſecret love of ſin, though not ſuffered to break forth into the outward practice. Here it is evident at firſt ſight that profane ſinners, drunkards, ſwearers, defrauders, avowed neglectors of religion, &c. have this diſmal brand upon them, that they are ſuch as do evil. Nay, all ſuch who are in their natural ſtate, without regeneration, whatever their outſide be, muſt be ranked in this claſs: *for that which is born of the fleſh is fleſh*, John iii. 6. *and they that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God, nor be rightly ſubject to his law.* Rom. viii. 7, 8.

And now who is for life, and who for damnation among you? Theſe characters are intended to make the diſtinction among you, and I pray you apply them for that purpoſe.

As

As for ſuch of you who amidſt all your lamented infirmities are endeavouring honeſtly to do good, and grieved at heart that you can do no more, you alſo muſt die; you muſt die, and feed the worms in the duſt. But you ſhall riſe glorioufly improved, riſe to an immortal life, and in all the terrors and conſternation of that laſt day, you will be ſecure, ſerene, and undiſturbed. The almighty Judge will be your friend, and that is enough. Let this thought diſarm the king of terrors, and give you courage to look down into the grave, and forward to the great riſing day. O what an happy immortality opens its glorious proſpects beyond the ken of ſight before you! and after a few ſtruggles more in this ſtate of warfare, and reſting awhile in the bed of death, at the regions of eternal bleſſedneſs you will arrive, and take up your reſidence there for ever.

But are there not ſome here who are conſcious that theſe favourable characters do not belong to them? that know that well-doing is not the buſineſs of their life, but that they are workers of iniquity? I tell you plainly, and with all the authority the word of God can give, that if you continue ſuch, you ſhall riſe to damnation. That will undoubtedly be your doom, unleſs you are greatly changed and reformed in heart and life. And will this be no excitement to vigorous endeavours? Are you proof againſt the energy of ſuch a conſideration? Ye careleſs ſinners, awake out of your ſecurity, and prepare for death and judgment! this fleeting life is all the time you have for preparation, and can you trifle it away? Your all, your eternal all is ſet upon the ſingle caſt of life, and you muſt ſtand the hazard of the dye. You can make but one experiment, and if that fail, through your ſloth or miſmanagement, you are irrecoverably undone for ever. Therefore, by the dread authority of the great God, by the terrors of death, and the great riſing day, by the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, and by the

the value of your immortal ſouls, I intreat, I charge, I adjure you to awake out of your ſecurity, and improve the precious moments of life. The world is dying all around you. And can you reſt eaſy in ſuch a world while unprepared for eternity? Awake to righteouſneſs now, at the gentle call of the goſpel, before the laſt trumpet give you an alarm of another kind.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.